



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

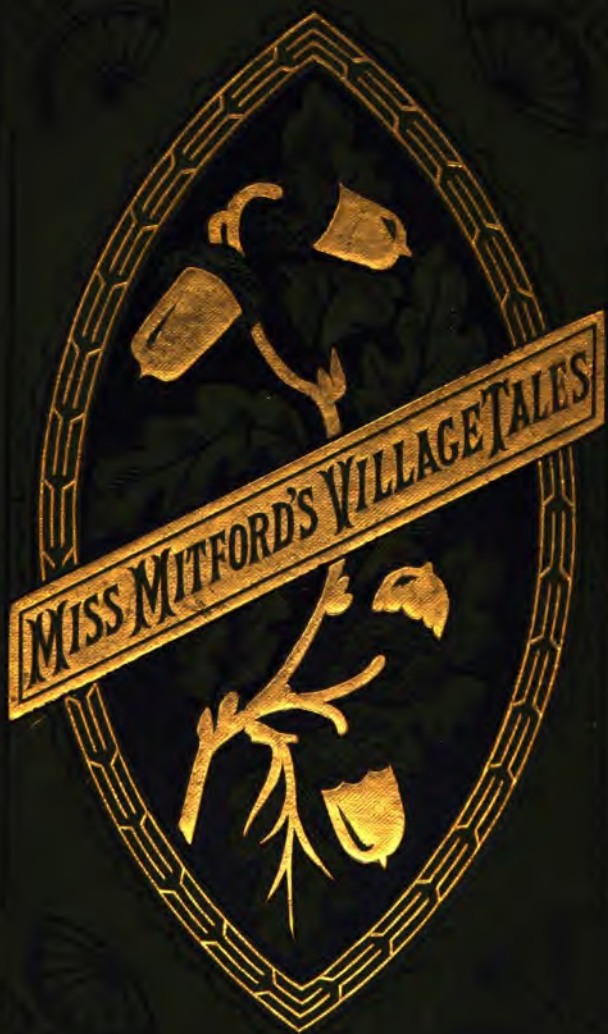
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

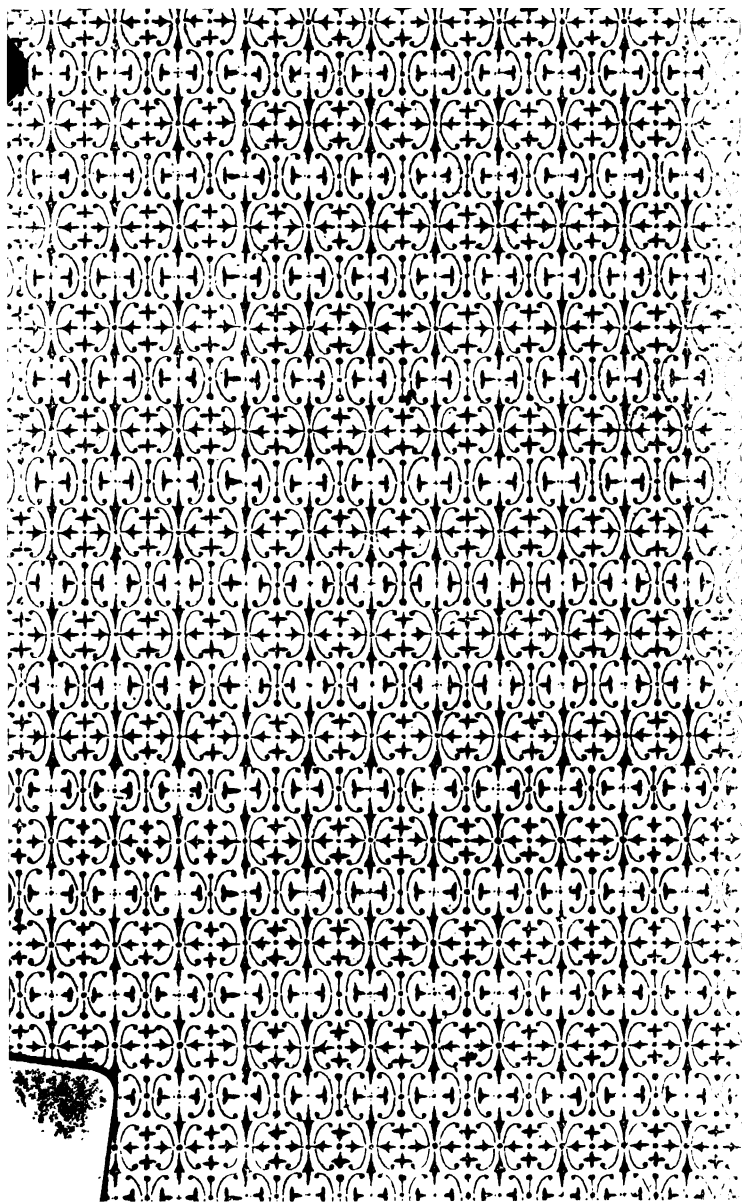
We also ask that you:

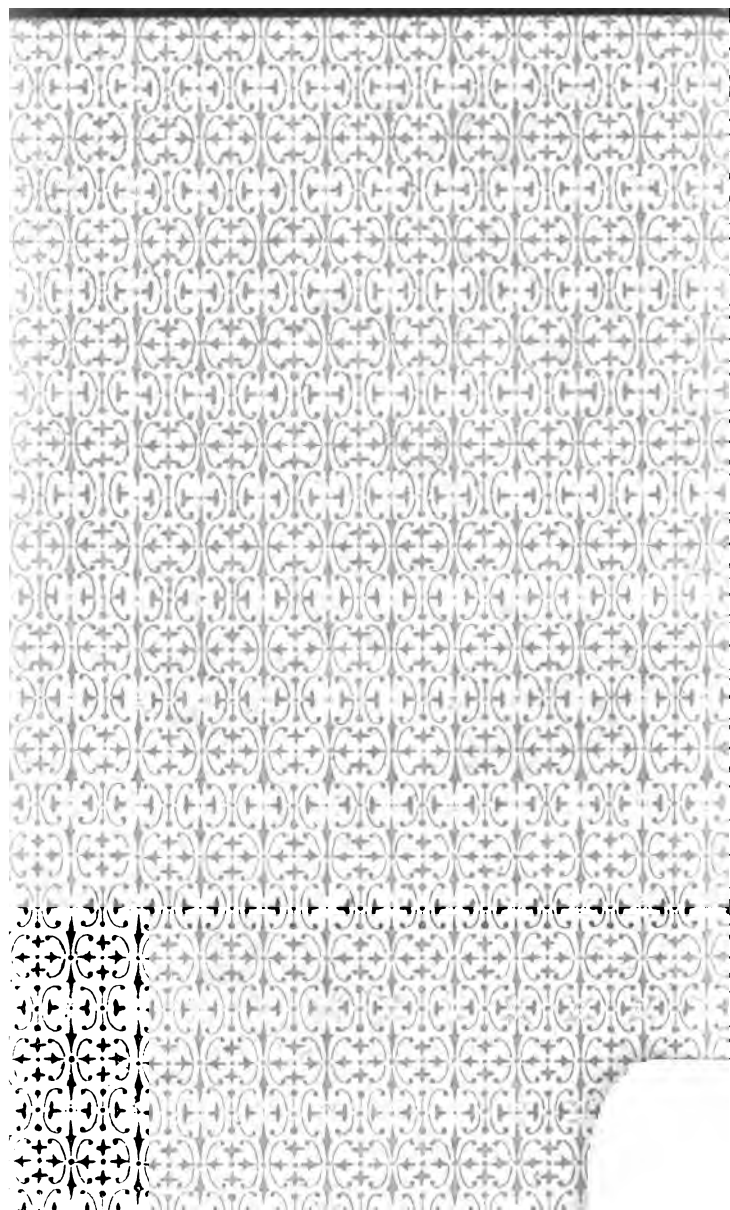
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>









600058549.

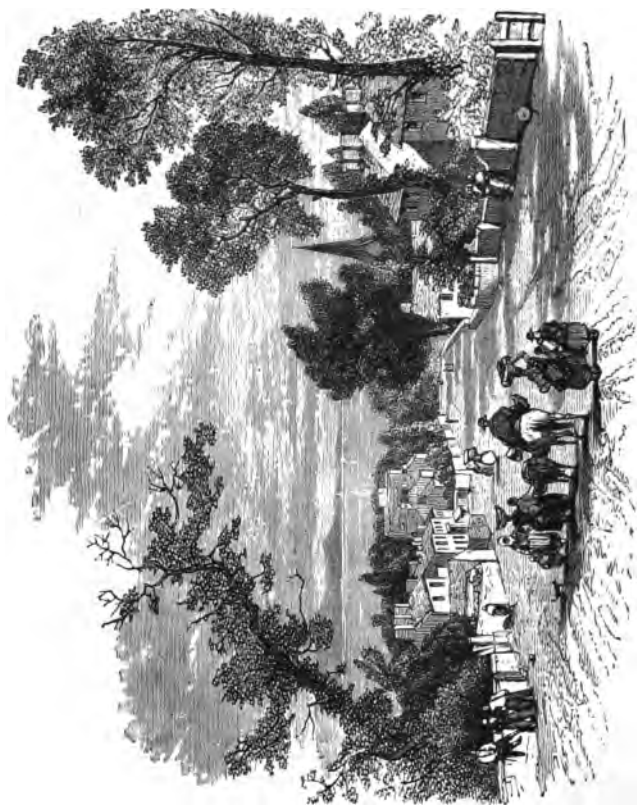
VILLAGE TALES AND SKETCHES.



600058549.

VILLAGE TALES AND SKETCHES.

MORRISON AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.



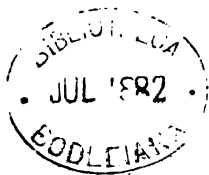
VILLAGE TALES AND SKETCHES.—*Frontispiece.*

VILLAGE TALES AND SKETCHES.

BY

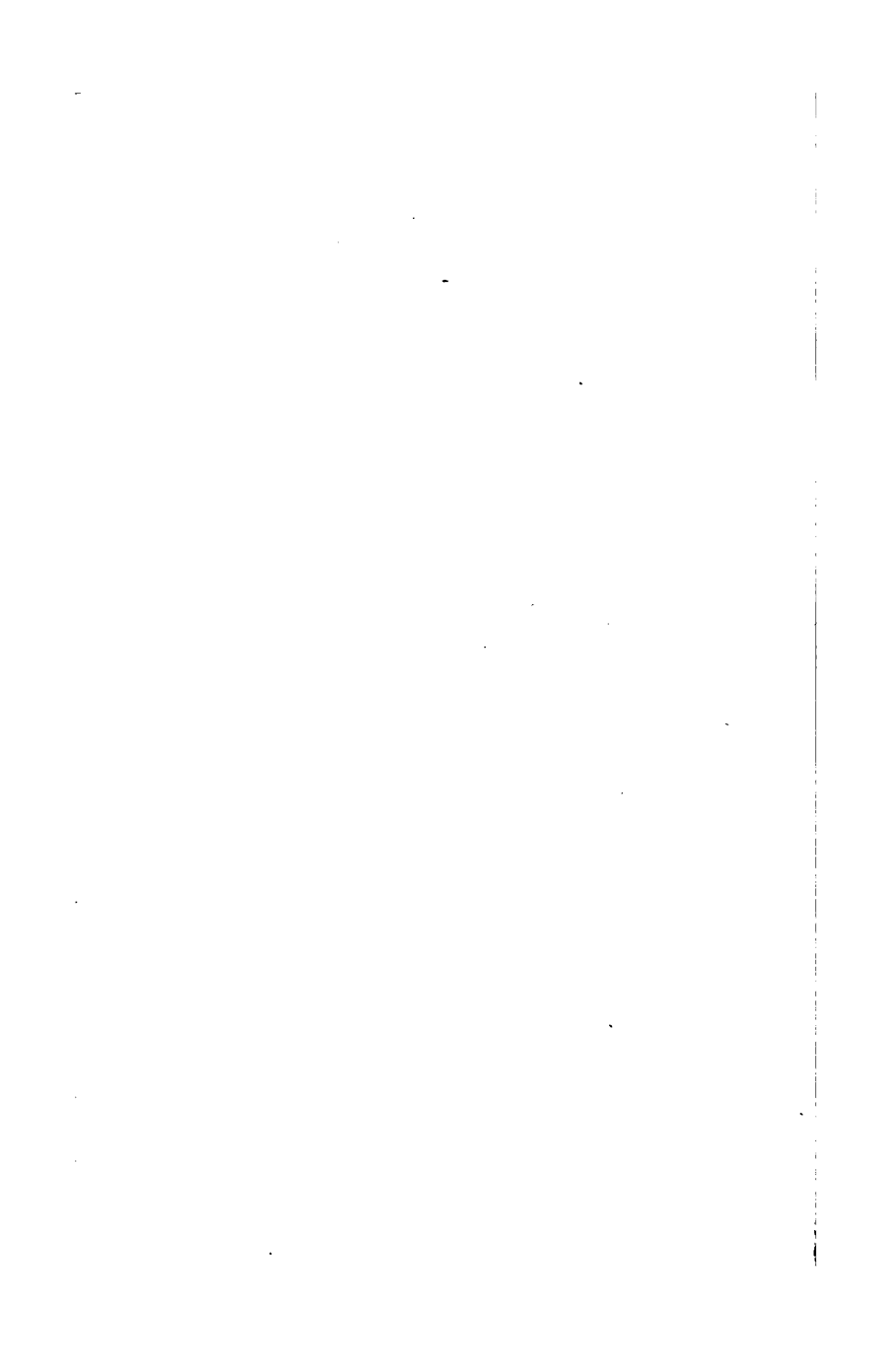
MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

AUTHOR OF 'OUR VILLAGE, SKETCHES OF RURAL CHARACTER AND SCENERY,'
'ATHERTON,' 'RECOLLECTIONS OF A LITERARY LIFE,' ETC.



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO & CO.
1881.

251. g. 383.





BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE.



FEW authors have a better right to genial appreciation than Mary Russell Mitford, who has produced much that the world will not willingly let die. She has written in a beautifully correct and pleasing way regarding country life and English country scenes, and has woven into dainty and pleasing forms many a romance of country life. Her beautiful tale of *Dora Creswell* relates in exquisite prose the same tale told by the Laureate in his equally fine poem *Dora*. The present work consists of a selection of her most characteristic tales and sketches, gleaned from the five volumes of her *Tales of Our Village*. A few of the sketches are descriptive of the children of the village, and are expressly juvenile in tone.

Mary Russell Mitford, the daughter of George Mitford, M.D., was born at Alresford, Hampshire, 16th December 1786. Her father sprang from a branch of the Mitfords, of Mitford Castle, Northum-

berland, and her mother, Jane Graham, from a member of the Netherby Clan. Dr. Mitford was a patriotic, but scarcely a prudent man. While the spirit of England was roused during the French Revolution and the various Continental wars, he, at his own cost, maintained and equipped a troop of cavalry, and managed to dissipate a fortune of between £30,000 and £40,000. He was resident at Lyme Regis when this took place, and he proceeded to London to repair his broken fortunes. Mary was ten years of age when the removal occurred, and in one of her walks about London with her father she relates a remarkable incident which took place.

‘One day—it was my birthday, and I was ten years old—he took me into a not very tempting-looking place, which was, as I speedily found, a lottery office. An Irish lottery was on the point of being drawn, and he desired me to choose one out of the several bits of printed paper that lay upon the counter. I did not then know their significance.

“Choose what number you like best,” said the dear papa, “and that shall be your birthday present.”

‘I immediately selected one, and put it into his hand—No. 2224.

“Ah,” said my father, examining it, “you must choose again. I want to buy a whole ticket, and this is only a quarter. Choose again, my pet!”

“No, dear papa, I like this one best.”

“There is the next number,” interposed the lottery office-keeper, “No. 2223.”

“Ay,” said my father, “that will do just as well; will it not, Mary? We’ll take that.”

“No!” I returned obstinately; “that won’t do. This is my birthday, you know, papa, and I am ten years old. Cast up my number, and you will find that the figures 2224 added together make ten; the others make only nine.”

And so, at the solicitation of his daughter, Dr. Mitford purchased the latter number, and in a few months they received the joyful intelligence that they had drawn a prize of £20,000. Within twenty years, this money, with the exception of a small sum settled on Mrs. Mitford, was all gone, and the family found themselves in difficulties. They removed from London to a small cottage at Three Mile Cross, near Reading, and here, and at another cottage at Swallowfield, three miles farther south, she continued to write her inimitable *Tales and Sketches of Our Village*. The scenery in and around these localities lives in her stories. Campbell the poet is said to have declined the first of these sketches, but eventually they were accepted by the editor of the *Lady’s Magazine*. After their publication in a separate form, as a first series of *Tales of Our Village* (of which she wrote in all five volumes, 1823–32), she had never any farther difficulty in finding a market for her literary wares. ‘There is so much truth and observation,’ remarks one of her critics, ‘in these rural delineations, that we cannot conceive their ever being considered obsolete or uninteresting. In them she

has treasured not only the result of long and familiar observation, but the feelings and conceptions of a truly poetical mind. She is a prose Cowper without his gloom or bitterness.' Her literary work up till 1853 embraced several novels and four or five tragedies, which were acted in London; also her interesting *Recollections of a Literary Life*. Her last work, *Atherton and Other Stories*, appeared in 1854. In 1838, Miss Mitford's name was added to the pension list. Her death took place in 1855, aged sixty-six.

Charles Kingsley, when rector of Eversley, and John Ruskin, both liked to have a talk with this talented lady at Swallowfield, and she in turn appreciated the talent of both her young friends. When in London she mingled in the best society, but she was seen to most advantage in her country home, where many good-hearted and admiring friends gathered around her. Mrs. S. C. Hall, after a first interview, has described her as 'a stout little lady,' with a black coal-scuttle bonnet, which 'added to the effect of her natural shortness and rotundity; but her manner was that of a cordial country gentlewoman. The pressure of her fat little hands, for she extended both, was warm; her eyes, both soft and bright, looked kindly and frankly into mine; and her pretty rosy mouth dimpled with smiles that were always sweet and friendly.' Such was Miss Mitford in society. Although compelled to eke out her income by her pen, this refined and gentle authoress has left behind her some of the finest country tales and sketches we possess.



CONTENTS.



	PAGE
Dora Creswell,	11
The Village Schoolmistress,	21
Judith Kent's Lodger,	35
The Magpies,	49
Harry Lewington,	55
Pride shall have a Fall,	61
A Country Cricket-match,	67
A Morning Ramble,	81
The Foster-mother,	91
Whitsun-Eve,	98
Our Maying,	105
The Lost Key,	116
Walks in the Country,	126
The First Primrose,	133
Violeting,	140
The Copse,	146

	PAGE
The Wood,	158
The Dell,	164
The Hard Summer,	171
Nutting,	182
The Visit,	189
Hannah Bint,	202
The Fall of the Leaf,	212
A Great Farm-house,	217





VILLAGE TALES AND SKETCHES.

DORA CRESWELL.

FEW things are more delightful than to saunter along these green lanes of ours in the busy harvest-time,—the deep verdure of the hedgerows, and the strong shadow of the trees, contrasting so vividly with the fields, partly waving with golden corn, partly studded with regular piles of heavy wheat-sheaves; the whole population abroad; the whole earth teeming with fruitfulness, and the bright autumn sun careering overhead, amidst the deep blue sky, and the fleecy clouds of the most glowing and least fickle of the seasons. Even a solitary walk loses its loneliness in the general cheerfulness of nature. The air is gay with bees and butterflies; the robin twitters from amongst the ripening hazel-nuts; and you cannot proceed a quarter of a mile without encountering some merry group of leasers, or some long line of majestic wains, groaning under their rich burden, brushing the close hedges on either side, and knock-

ing their tall tops against the overhanging trees ; the very image of ponderous plenty.

Pleasant, however, as such a procession is to look at, it is somewhat dangerous to meet, especially in a narrow lane ; and I thought myself very fortunate, one day last August, in being so near a five-barred gate as to be enabled to escape from a *cortège* of labourers and harvest waggons, sufficiently bulky and noisy to convoy half the wheat in the parish. On they went, men, women, and children, shouting, laughing, and singing in joyous expectation of the coming harvest-home ; the very waggons nodding from side to side, as if tipsy, and threatening every moment to break down bank, and tree, and hedge, and crush every obstacle that opposed them. It would have been as safe to encounter the car of Juggernaut. I blessed my stars for my escape ; and after leaning on the friendly gate until the last gleaner had passed, a ragged rogue of seven years old, who, with hair as white as flax, a skin as brown as a berry, and features as grotesque as an Indian idol, was brandishing his tuft of wheat-ears, and shrieking forth, in a shrill, childish voice, and with a most ludicrous gravity, the popular song of 'Buy a Broom.' After watching this young gentleman (the urchin is of my acquaintance) as long as a curve in the lane would permit, I turned to examine in what spot chance had placed me, and found before my eyes another picture of rural life, but one as different from that which I had just witnessed as the Arcadian peasants of Poussin from the Boors of Teniers, or weeds from flowers, or poetry from prose.

I had taken refuge in a harvest-field belonging to my good neighbour, Farmer Creswell ; a beautiful child lay on the ground at some little distance, whilst

a young girl, resting from the labour of reaping, was twisting a rustic wreath of enamelled corn-flowers, brilliant poppies, snow-white lily-bines, and light fragile harebells, mingled with tufts of the richest wheat-ears, around its hat.

There was something in the tender youthfulness of these two innocent creatures—in the pretty, though somewhat fantastic, occupation of the girl, the fresh wild-flowers, the ripe and swelling corn—that harmonized with the season and the hour, and conjured up memories of ‘Dis and Proserpine,’ and of all that is gorgeous and graceful in old mythology, of the lovely Lavinia of our own poet, and of the finest pastoral of the world, the far lovelier Ruth. But these fanciful associations soon vanished before the real sympathy excited by the actors of the scene, both of whom were known to me, and both objects of a sincere and lively interest.

The young girl, Dora Creswell, was the orphan niece of one of the wealthiest yeomen in our part of the world, the only child of his only brother; and, having lost both her parents whilst still an infant, had been reared by her widowed uncle as fondly and carefully as his own son Walter. He said that he loved her quite as well, perhaps he loved her better; for though it was impossible for a father not to be proud of the bold handsome youth, who at eighteen had a man’s strength, a man’s stature, was the best ringer, the best cricketer, and the best shot in the county, yet the fairy Dora, who, nearly ten years younger, was at once his handmaid, his housekeeper, his plaything, and his companion, was evidently the apple of his eye. Our good farmer vaunted her accomplishments, as men of his class are wont to boast of a high-bred horse or a favourite greyhound.

ing their tall tops against the overhanging trees ; the very image of ponderous plenty.

Pleasant, however, as such a procession is to look at, it is somewhat dangerous to meet, especially in a narrow lane ; and I thought myself very fortunate, one day last August, in being so near a five-barred gate as to be enabled to escape from a *cortège* of labourers and harvest waggons, sufficiently bulky and noisy to convoy half the wheat in the parish. On they went, men, women, and children, shouting, laughing, and singing in joyous expectation of the coming harvest-home ; the very waggons nodding from side to side, as if tipsy, and threatening every moment to break down bank, and tree, and hedge, and crush every obstacle that opposed them. It would have been as safe to encounter the car of Juggernaut. I blessed my stars for my escape ; and after leaning on the friendly gate until the last gleaner had passed, a ragged rogue of seven years old, who, with hair as white as flax, a skin as brown as a berry, and features as grotesque as an Indian idol, was brandishing his tuft of wheat-ears, and shrieking forth, in a shrill, childish voice, and with a most ludicrous gravity, the popular song of 'Buy a Broom.' After watching this young gentleman (the urchin is of my acquaintance) as long as a curve in the lane would permit, I turned to examine in what spot chance had placed me, and found before my eyes another picture of rural life, but one as different from that which I had just witnessed as the Arcadian peasants of Poussin from the Boors of Teniers, or weeds from flowers, or poetry from prose.

I had taken refuge in a harvest-field belonging to my good neighbour, Farmer Creswell ; a beautiful child lay on the ground at some little distance

a young girl, resting from the labour of reaping, was twisting a rustic wreath of enamelled corn-flowers, brilliant poppies, snow-white lily-bines, and light fragile harebells, mingled with tufts of the richest wheat-ears, around its hat.

There was something in the tender youthfulness of these two innocent creatures—in the pretty, though somewhat fantastic, occupation of the girl, the fresh wild-flowers, the ripe and swelling corn—that harmonized with the season and the hour, and conjured up memories of ‘Dis and Proserpine,’ and of all that is gorgeous and graceful in old mythology, of the lovely Lavinia of our own poet, and of the finest pastoral of the world, the far lovelier Ruth. But these fanciful associations soon vanished before the real sympathy excited by the actors of the scene, both of whom were known to me, and both objects of a sincere and lively interest.

The young girl, Dora Creswell, was the orphan niece of one of the wealthiest yeomen in our part of the world, the only child of his only brother; and, having lost both her parents whilst still an infant, had been reared by her widowed uncle as fondly and carefully as his own son Walter. He said that he loved her quite as well, perhaps he loved her better; for though it was impossible for a father not to be proud of the bold handsome youth, who at eighteen had a man’s strength, a man’s stature, was the best ringer, the best cricketer, and the best shot in the county, yet the fairy Dora, who, nearly ten years younger, was at once his handmaid, his housekeeper, his plaything, and his companion, was evidently the apple of his eye. Our good farmer vaunted her accomplishments, as men of his class are wont to do, as a bred horse or a favourite grey.

ing their tall tops against the overhanging trees; the very image of ponderous plenty.

Pleasant, however, as such a procession is to look at, it is somewhat dangerous to meet, especially in a narrow lane; and I thought myself very fortunate, one day last August, in being so near a five-barred gate as to be enabled to escape from a *cortège* of labourers and harvest waggons, sufficiently bulky and noisy to convoy half the wheat in the parish. On they went, men, women, and children, shouting, laughing, and singing in joyous expectation of the coming harvest-home; the very waggons nodding from side to side, as if tipsy, and threatening every moment to break down bank, and tree, and hedge, and crush every obstacle that opposed them. It would have been as safe to encounter the car of Juggernaut. I blessed my stars for my escape; and after leaning on the friendly gate until the last gleaner had passed, a ragged rogue of seven years old, who, with hair as white as flax, a skin as brown as a berry, and features as grotesque as an Indian idol, was brandishing his tuft of wheat-ears, and shrieking forth, in a shrill, childish voice, and with a most ludicrous gravity, the popular song of 'Buy a Broom.' After watching this young gentleman (the urchin is of my acquaintance) as long as a curve in the lane would permit, I turned to examine in what spot chance had placed me, and found before my eyes another picture of rural life, but one as different from that which I had just witnessed as the Arcadian peasants of Poussin from the Boors of Teniers, or weeds from flowers, or poetry from prose.

I had taken refuge in a harvest-field belonging to my good neighbour, Farmer Creswell; a beautiful child lay on the ground at some little distance, whilst

a young girl, resting from the labour of reaping, was twisting a rustic wreath of enamelled corn-flowers, brilliant poppies, snow-white lily-bines, and light fragile harebells, mingled with tufts of the richest wheat-ears, around its hat.

There was something in the tender youthfulness of these two innocent creatures—in the pretty, though somewhat fantastic, occupation of the girl, the fresh wild-flowers, the ripe and swelling corn—that harmonized with the season and the hour, and conjured up memories of ‘Dis and Proserpine,’ and of all that is gorgeous and graceful in old mythology, of the lovely Lavinia of our own poet, and of the finest pastoral of the world, the far lovelier Ruth. But these fanciful associations soon vanished before the real sympathy excited by the actors of the scene, both of whom were known to me, and both objects of a sincere and lively interest.

The young girl, Dora Creswell, was the orphan niece of one of the wealthiest yeomen in our part of the world, the only child of his only brother; and, having lost both her parents whilst still an infant, had been reared by her widowed uncle as fondly and carefully as his own son Walter. He said that he loved her quite as well, perhaps he loved her better; for though it was impossible for a father not to be proud of the bold handsome youth, who at eighteen had a man’s strength, a man’s stature, was the best ringer, the best cricketer, and the best shot in the county, yet the fairy Dora, who, nearly ten years younger, was at once his handmaid, his housekeeper, his plaything, and his companion, was evidently the apple of his eye. Our good farmer vaunted her accomplishments, as men of his class are wont to boast of a high-bred horse or a favourite greyhound.

She could make a shirt and a pudding, darn stockings, rear poultry, keep accounts, and read the newspaper; was as famous for gooseberry wine as Mrs. Primrose, and could compound a syllabub with any dairy-woman in the county. There was not so handy a little creature anywhere,—so thoughtful and trusty about the house, and yet out of doors as gay as a lark, and as wild as the wind. Nobody was like his Dora. So said, and so thought, Farmer Creswell; and before Dora was ten years old, he had resolved that in due time she should marry his son Walter, and had informed both parties of his intention.

Now Farmer Creswell's intentions were well known to be as unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. He was a fair specimen of an English yeoman,—a tall, square-built, muscular man, stout and active, with a resolute countenance, a keen eye, and an intelligent smile; his temper was boisterous and irascible, generous and kind to those whom he loved, but quick to take offence, and slow to pardon, expecting and exacting implicit obedience from all about him. With all Dora's good gifts, the sweet and yielding nature of the gentle and submissive little girl was undoubtedly the chief cause of her uncle's partiality. Above all, he was obstinate in the highest degree, had never been known to yield a point or change a resolution; and the fault was the more inveterate because he called it firmness, and accounted it a virtue. For the rest, he was a person of excellent principle and perfect integrity, clear-headed, prudent, and sagacious; fond of agricultural experiments, which he pursued cautiously and successfully; a good farmer, and a good man.

His son Walter, who was in person a handsome likeness of his father, resembled him also in many

points of character ; was equally obstinate, and far more fiery, hot, and bold. He loved his pretty cousin much as he would have loved a favourite sister, and might very possibly, if let alone, have become attached to her, as his father wished ; but to be dictated to, to be chained down to a distant engagement, to hold himself bound to a mere child, the very idea was absurd ; and, restraining with difficulty an abrupt denial, he walked down into the village, predisposed, out of sheer contradiction, to fall in love with the first young woman who should come in his way, and he did fall in love accordingly.

Mary Hay, the object of his ill-fated passion, was the daughter of the respectable mistress of a small endowed school at the other end of the parish. She was a delicate, interesting creature, with a slight, drooping figure, and a fair, downcast face, like a snowdrop, forming such a contrast with her gay and gallant wooer, as Love, in his vagaries, is often pleased to bring together.

The courtship was secret and tedious, and prolonged from months to years, for Mary shrank from the painful contest which she knew that an avowal of their attachment would occasion. At length her mother died, and, deprived of home and maintenance, she reluctantly consented to a private marriage. An immediate discovery ensued, and was followed by all the evils, and more than all, that her worst fears had anticipated. Her husband was turned from the house of his father, and, in less than three months, his death by an inflammatory fever left her a desolate and penniless widow, unowned and unassisted by the stern parent, on whose unrelenting temper neither the death of his son nor the birth of his grandson seemed to make the slightest impression. But for

the general sympathy excited by the deplorable situation and blameless demeanour of the widowed bride, she and her infant might have taken refuge in the workhouse. The whole neighbourhood was zealous to relieve and to serve them ; but their most liberal benefactress, their most devoted friend, was poor Dora. Considering her uncle's partiality to herself as the primary cause of all this misery, she felt like a guilty creature ; and, casting off at once her native timidity and habitual submission, she had repeatedly braved his anger by the most earnest supplications for mercy and for pardon ; and when this proved unavailing, she tried to mitigate their distresses by all the assistance that her small means would permit. Every shilling of her pocket-money she expended upon her poor cousins ; worked for them, begged for them, and transferred to them every present that was made to herself, from a silk frock to a penny tartlet. Everything that was her own she gave, but nothing of her uncle's ; for though sorely tempted to transfer some of the plenty around her to those whose claims seemed so just, and whose need was so urgent, Dora felt that she was trusted, and that she must prove herself trustworthy.

Such was the posture of affairs at the time of my encounter with Dora and little Walter in the harvest-field ; the rest will be best told in the course of our dialogue.

'And so, madam, I cannot bear to see my dear cousin Mary so sick and so melancholy ; and the dear, dear child, that a king might be proud of,—only look at him !' exclaimed Dora, interrupting herself, as the beautiful child, sitting on the ground in all the placid dignity of infancy, looked up at me and smiled in my face ; 'only look at him,' continued she, 'and

think of that dear boy and his dear mother living on charity, and they my uncle's lawful heirs, whilst I, who have no right whatever, no claim at all,—I, that, compared to them, am but a far-off kinswoman, the mere creature of his bounty,—should revel in comfort and in plenty, and they starving! I cannot bear it, and I will not. And then the wrong that he is doing himself, he that is really so good and kind, to be called a hard-hearted tyrant by the whole country-side. And he is unhappy himself too,—I know that he is. So tired as he comes home, he will walk about his room half the night; and often at meal-times he will drop his knife and fork, and sigh so heavily. He may turn me out of doors, as he threatened, or, what is worse, call me ungrateful or undutiful, but he shall see this boy.'

'He never has seen him, then; and that is the reason you are tricking him out so prettily?'

'Yes, ma'am. Mind what I told you, Walter, and hold up your hat, and say what I bid you.'

'Ganpapa's fowers!' stammered the pretty boy, in his sweet childish voice, the first words that I ever heard him speak.

'Grandpapa's flowers!' said his zealous preceptress.

'Ganpapa's fowers!' echoed the boy.

'Shall you take the child to the house, Dora?' asked I.

'No, ma'am, for I look for my uncle here every minute, and this is the best place to ask a favour in, for the very sight of the great crop puts him in good humour,—not so much on account of the profits, but because the land never bore half so much before, and it's all owing to the management in dressing and drilling. I came reaping here to-day on purpose to please him; for though he says he does not wish me

to work in the fields, I know he likes it; and here he shall see little Walter. Do you think he can resist him, ma'am?' continued Dora, leaning over her infant cousin, and with the grace and fondness of a young Madonna; 'do you think he can resist him, poor child?—so helpless, so harmless, his own blood too, and so like his father. No heart could be hard enough to hold out, and I am sure that he will not. Only,' pursued Dora, relapsing into her girlish tone and attitude, as a cold fear crossed her enthusiastic hope, 'only I'm half afraid that Walter will cry. It's strange, when one wants anything to behave particularly well, how sure it is to be naughty—my pets especially. I remember when my Lady Countess came on purpose to see our white peacock that we got in a present from India, the obstinate bird ran away behind a bean-stack, and would not spread his train, to show the dead-white spots on his glossy white feathers, all we could do. Her ladyship was quite angry. And my red and yellow marvel of Peru, which used to blow at four in the afternoon, as regular as the clock struck, was not open the other day at five, when dear Miss Ellen came to paint it, though the sun was shining as bright as it does now. If Walter should scream and cry, for my uncle does look so stern! and then it's Saturday, and he has such a beard! if the child should be frightened! Be sure, Walter, you don't cry!' said Dora, in great alarm.

'Ganpapa's fowers!' replied the smiling boy, holding up his hat; and his young protectress was comforted.

At that moment the farmer was heard whistling to his dog in a neighbouring field, and, fearful that my presence might injure the cause, I departed, my thoughts full of the noble little girl and her generous purpose.

I had promised to call the next afternoon to learn her success, and, passing the harvest-field in my way, I found a group assembled there, which instantly dissipated my anxiety. On the very spot where we had parted, I saw the good farmer himself, in his Sunday clothes, tossing little Walter in the air; the child laughing and screaming with delight, and his grandfather apparently quite as much delighted as himself. A pale, slender young woman, in deep mourning, stood looking at their gambols with an air of intense thankfulness; and Dora, the cause and sharer of all this happiness, was loitering behind, playing with the flowers in Walter's hat, which she was holding in her hand. Catching my eye, the sweet girl came to me instantly.

'I see how it is, my dear Dora, and I give you joy from the bottom of my heart. Little Walter behaved well, then?'

'Oh, he behaved like an angel!'

'Did he say, Ganpapa's fowers?'

'Nobody spoke a word. The moment the child took off his hat, and looked up, the truth seemed to flash on my uncle, and to melt his heart at once, the boy is so like his father. He knew him instantly, and caught him up in his arms, and hugged him just as he is hugging him now.'

'And the beard, Dora?'

'Why, that seemed to take the child's fancy: he put up his little hands and stroked it, and laughed in his grandfather's face, and flung his chubby arms round his neck, and held out his sweet mouth to be kissed; and how my uncle did kiss him! I thought he never would have done. And then he sat down on a wheat-sheaf and cried; and I cried too! Very strange that one should cry for happiness!' added Dora, as some

large drops fell on the wreath which she was adjusting round Walter's hat. 'Very strange,' repeated she, looking up with a bright smile, and brushing away the tears from her rosy cheek with a bunch of corn-flowers,—'very strange that I should cry when I am the happiest creature alive; for Mary and Walter are to live with us, and my dear uncle, instead of being angry with me, says that he loves me better than ever. How very strange it is,' said Dora, as the tears poured down faster and faster, 'that I should be so foolish as to cry!'





THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMISTRESS.

WOMEN, fortunately perhaps for their happiness and their virtue, have, as compared with men, so few opportunities of acquiring permanent distinction, that it is rare to find a female, unconnected with literature or with history, whose name is remembered after her monument is defaced, and the brass on her coffin-lid corroded. Such, however, was the case with Dame Eleanor, the widow of Sir Richard Lacy, whose name, at the end of three centuries, continued to be as freshly and as frequently spoken, as 'familiar' a 'household word,' in the little village of Aberleigh, as if she had flourished there yesterday. Her memory was embalmed by a deed of charity and of goodness. She had founded and endowed a girls' school for 'the instruction' (to use the words of the deed) of 'twenty poor children, and the maintenance of one discreet and godly matron;' and the school still continued to be called after its foundress, and the very spot on which the school-house stood to be known by the name of Lady Lacy's Green.

It was a spot worthy of its destination, a spot of remarkable cheerfulness and beauty. The Green was small, of irregular shape, and situate at a confluence of shady lanes. Half the roads and paths of the

parish met there, probably for the convenience of crossing in that place, by a stone bridge of one arch covered with ivy, the winding rivulet which intersected the whole village, and which, sweeping in a narrow channel round the school garden, widened into a stream of some consequence in the richly-wooded meadows beyond. The banks of the brook, as it wound its glittering course over the Green, were set here and there with clumps of forest trees, chiefly bright green elms, and aspens with their quivering leaves and pale shining bark ; whilst a magnificent beech stood alone near the gate leading to the school, partly overshadowing the little court in which the house was placed. The building itself was a beautiful small structure, in the ornamented style of Elizabeth's day, with pointed roofs and pinnacles, and clustered chimneys, and casement windows ; the whole house enwreathed and garlanded by a most luxuriant vine. The date of the erection, 1563, was cut in stone inserted in the brick-work above the porch ; but the foundress had, with an unostentatious modesty, withheld her name ; leaving it, as she safely might, to the grateful recollection of the successive generations who profited by her benevolence. Altogether it was a most gratifying scene to the eye and to the heart. No one ever saw Lady Lacy's school-house without admiration, especially in the play-hour at noon, when the children, freed from 'restraint that sweetens liberty,' were clustered under the old beech tree, revelling in their innocent freedom, running, jumping, shouting, and laughing with all their might,—the only sort of riot which it is pleasant to witness. The painter and the philanthropist might contemplate the scene with equal delight.

The right of appointing both the mistress and the

scholars had been originally invested in the Lacy family, to whom nearly the whole of the parish had at one time belonged. But the estates, the manor, the hall-house, had long passed into other hands and other names, and this privilege of charity was now the only possession which the heirs of Lady Lacy retained in Aberleigh. Reserving to themselves the right of nominating the matron, her descendants had therefore delegated to the vicar and the parish officers the selection of the children, and the general regulation of the school,—a sort of council of regency, which, for as simple and as peaceful as the government seems, a disputatious churchwarden or a sturdy overseer would sometimes contrive to render sufficiently stormy. I have known as much canvassing, and almost as much ill-will, in a contested election for one of Lady Lacy's scholarships, as for a scholarship in grander places, or even for an M.P.-ship in the next borough ; and the great schism between the late Farmer Brookes and all his coadjutors, as to whether the original uniform of little green stuff gowns, with white bibs and aprons, tippets and mob, should be commuted for modern cotton frocks and cottage bonnets, fairly set the parish by the ears. Owing to the good farmer's glorious obstinacy (which I suppose he called firmness), the green-gownians lost the day. I believe that, as a matter of calculation, the man might be right, and that his costume was cheaper and most convenient ; but I am sure that I should have been against him, right or wrong,—the other dress was so pretty, so primitive, so neat, so becoming ; the little lasses looked like rosebuds in the midst of their leaves ; besides, it was the old traditionary dress,—the dress contrived and approved by Lady Lacy. Oh, it should never have been changed, never !

Since there was so much contention in the election of pupils, it was perhaps lucky for the vestry that the exercise of the more splendid piece of patronage, the appointment of a mistress, did not enter into its duties. Mr. Lacy, the representative of the foundress, a man of fortune in a distant county, generally bestowed the situation on some old dependent of his family. During the churchwardenship of Farmer Brookes, no less than three village *gouvernantes* arrived at Aberleigh,—a quick succession! It made more than half the business of our zealous and bustling man of office, an amateur in such matters, to instruct and overlook them. The first importation was Dame Whittaker, a person of no small importance, who had presided as head-nurse over two generations of the Lacys, and was now, on the dispersion of the last set of her nurslings to their different schools, and an unlucky quarrel with a favourite lady's-maid, promoted and banished to this distant government. Nobody could well be more unfit for her new station, or better suited to her old. She was a nurse from top to toe. Round, portly, smiling, with a coaxing voice, and an indolent manner; much addicted to snuff and green tea, to sitting still, to telling long stories, and to humouring children. She spoiled every brat she came near, just as she had been used to spoil the little Master Edwards and Miss Julias of her ancient dominions. She could not have scolded if she would,—the gift was not in her. Under her misrule the school grew into sad disorder: the girls not only learnt nothing, but unlearnt what they knew before; work was lost,—even the new shifts of the vicar's lady; books were torn; and, for the climax of evil, no sampler was prepared to carry round at Christmas from house to house,—the first time such an omission

had occurred within the memory of man. Farmer Brookes was at his wits' end. He visited the school six days in the week, to admonish and reprove; he even went nigh to threaten that he would work a sampler himself; and finally bestowed on the unfortunate ex-nurse the nickname of Queen Log,—a piece of disrespect which, together with other grievances, proved so annoying to poor Dame Whittaker, that she found the air of Aberleigh disagree with her, patched up a peace with her old enemy the lady's-maid, abdicated that unruly and rebellious principality the school, and retired with great delight to her quiet home in the deserted nursery, where, as far as I know, she still remains.

The grief of the children on losing this most indulgent non-instructress was not mitigated by the appearance or demeanour of her successor, who at first seemed a preceptress after Farmer Brookes's own heart, a perfect Queen Stork. Dame Banks was the widow of Mr. Lacy's gamekeeper,—a little thin woman, with a hooked nose, a sharp voice, and a prodigious activity of tongue. She scolded all day long; and, for the first week, passed for a great teacher. After that time it began to be discovered that, in spite of her lessons, the children did not learn; notwithstanding her rating, they did not mind; and in the midst of a continual bustle nothing was ever done. Dame Banks was in fact a well-intentioned, worthy woman, with a restless, irritable temper, a strong desire to do her duty, and a woful ignorance how to set about it. She was rather too old to be taught either,—at least she required a gentler instructor than the good churchwarden; and so much ill-will was springing up between them, that he had even been heard to regret the loss of Dame Whittaker's quietness,

when very suddenly poor Dame Banks fell ill, and died. The sword had worn the scabbard ; but she was better than she seemed ; a thoroughly well-meaning woman,—grateful, pious, and charitable ; even our man of office admitted this.

The next in succession was one with whom my trifling pen, dearly as that light and fluttering instrument loves to dally and disport over the surface of things, must take no saucy freedom ; one of whom we all felt it impossible to speak or think without respect ; one who made Farmer Brookes's office of adviser a sinecure, by putting the whole school, himself included, into its proper place, setting everybody in order, and keeping them so. I don't know how she managed, unless by good sense and good humour, and that happy art of government, which seems no art at all, because it is so perfect ; but the children were busy and happy, the vestry pleased, and the churchwarden contented. All went well under Mrs. Allen.

She was an elderly woman, nearer perhaps to seventy than to sixty, and of an exceedingly venerable and prepossessing appearance. Delicacy was her chief characteristic,—a delicacy so complete that it pervaded her whole person, from her tall, slender figure, her fair, faded complexion, and her silver hair, to the exquisite nicety of dress by which, at all hours and seasons, from Sunday morning to Saturday night, she was invariably distinguished. The soil of the day was never seen on her apparel ; dust would not cling to her snowy caps and handkerchiefs ; such was the art magic of her neatness. Her very pins did their office in a different manner from those belonging to other people. Her manner was gentle, cheerful, and courteous, with a simplicity and pro-

priety of expression that perplexed all listeners ; it seemed so exactly what belongs to the highest birth and the highest breeding. She was humble, very humble ; but her humility was evidently the result of a truly Christian spirit, and would equally have distinguished her in any station. The poor people, always nice judges of behaviour, felt, they did not know why, that she was their superior ; the gentry of the neighbourhood suspected her to be their equal, —some clergyman's or officer's widow, reduced in circumstances,—and would have treated her as such, had she not, on discovering their mistake, eagerly undeceived them. She had been, she said, all her life a servant, the personal attendant of one dear mistress, on whose decease she had been recommended to Mr. Lacy ; and to his kindness, under Providence, was indebted for a home and a provision for her helpless age, and the still more helpless youth of a poor orphan, far dearer to her than herself. This avowal, though it changed the character of the respect paid to Mrs. Allen, was certainly not calculated to diminish its amount ; and the new mistress of Lady Lacy's school, and the beautiful order of her house and garden, continued to be the pride and admiration of Aberleigh.

The orphan of whom she spoke was a little girl about eleven years old, who lived with her, and whose black frock bespoke the recent death of some relative. She had lately, Mrs. Allen said, lost her grandmother, her only remaining parent, and had now no friend but herself on earth ; but there was One above who was a Father to the fatherless, and He would protect poor Jane. And as she said this there was a touch of emotion, a break of the voice, a tremor on the lip, very unlike the usual cheerfulness and self-

command of her manner. The child was evidently very dear to her. Jane was indeed a most interesting creature; not pretty,—a girl of that age seldom is,—the beauty of childhood is outgrown, that of youth not come; and Jane could scarcely ever have had any other pretensions to prettiness than the fine expression of her dark grey eyes, and the general sweetness of her countenance. She was pale, thin, and delicate; serious and thoughtful far beyond her years; averse to play, and shrinking from notice. Her fondness for Mrs. Allen, and her constant and unremitting attention to her health and comforts, were peculiarly remarkable. Every part of their small housewifery that her height and strength and skill would enable her to perform, she insisted on doing, and many things far beyond her power she attempted. Never was so industrious or so handy a little maiden. Old Nelly Chun, the charwoman, who went once a week to the house to wash and bake and scour, declared that Jane did more than herself; and to all who knew Nelly's opinion of her own doings, this praise appeared superlative.

In the school-room she was equally assiduous, not as a learner, but as a teacher. None so clever as Jane in superintending the different exercises of the needle, the spelling-book, and the slate. From the little workwoman's first attempt to insert thread into a pocket-handkerchief, the digging and ploughing of cambric, miscalled hemming, up to the nice and delicate mysteries of stitching and button-holing; from the easy junction of *a b*, *ab*, and *b a*, *ba*, to that tremendous sesquipedalian word *irrefragability*, at which even I tremble as I write; from the Numeration Table to Practice, nothing came amiss to her. In figures she was particularly quick. Generally speak-

ing, her patience with the other children, however dull or tiresome or giddy they might be, was exemplary; but a false accountant, a stupid arithmetician, would put her out of humour. The only time I ever heard her sweet, gentle voice raised a note above its natural key, was in reprimanding Susan Wheeler, a sturdy, square-made, rosy-cheeked lass, as big again as herself, the dunce and beauty of the school, who had three times cast up a sum of three figures, and three times made the total wrong. Jane ought to have admired the ingenuity evinced by such a variety of error, but she did not; it fairly put her in a passion. She herself was not only clever in figures, but fond of them to an extraordinary degree,—luxuriated in Long Division, and revelled in the Rule-of-Three. Had she been a boy, she would probably have been a great mathematician, and have won that fickle, fleeting, shadowy wreath, that crown made of the rainbow, that vainest of all earthly pleasures, but which yet *is* a pleasure,—Fame.

Happier, far happier, was the good, the lowly, the pious child, in her humble duties! Grave and quiet as she seemed, she had many moments of intense and placid enjoyment, when the duties of the day were over, and she sat reading in the porch by the side of Mrs. Allen, or walked with her in the meadows on a Sunday evening after church. Jane was certainly contented and happy; and yet every one that saw her thought of her with that kind of interest which is akin to pity. There was a pale, fragile grace about her, such as we sometimes see in a rose which has blown in the shade; or rather, to change the simile, the drooping and delicate look of a tender plant removed from the hothouse to the open air. We could not help feeling sure (notwith-

standing our mistake with regard to Mrs. Allen) that *this* was indeed a transplanted flower ; and that the village school, however excellently her habits had become inured to her situation, was not her proper atmosphere.

Several circumstances corroborated our suspicions. My lively young friend, Sophia Grey, standing with me one day at the gate of the school-house, where I had been talking with Mrs. Allen, remarked to me, in French, the sly, demure vanity with which Susan Wheeler, whose beauty had attracted her attention, was observing and returning her glances. The playful manner in which Sophia described Susan's *regard furtif* made me smile, and, looking accidentally at Jane, I saw that she was smiling too, clearly comprehending and enjoying the full force of the pleasantry. She must understand French ; and when questioned she confessed she did, and thankfully accepted the loan of books in that language. Another time, being sent on a message to the Vicarage, and left for some minutes alone in the parlour, with a piano standing open in the room, she could not resist the temptation of touching the keys, and was discovered playing an air of Mozart with great taste and execution. At this detection she blushed, as if caught in a crime, and hurried away in tears and without her message. It was clear that she had once learnt music. But the surest proof that Jane's original station had been higher than that which she now filled, was the mixture of respect and fondness with which Mrs. Allen treated her, and the deep regret she sometimes testified at seeing her employed in any menial office.

At last, elicited by some warm praise of the charming child, our good schoolmistress disclosed her

story. Jane Mowbray was the grand-daughter of the lady in whose service Mrs. Allen had passed her life. Her father had been a man of high family and splendid fortune; had married beneath himself, as it was called, a friendless orphan, with no portion but beauty and virtue; and on her death, which followed shortly on the birth of her daughter, had plunged into every kind of vice and extravagance. What need to tell a tale of sin and suffering? Mr. Mowbray had ruined himself, had ruined all belonging to him, and finally had joined our armies abroad as a volunteer, and had fallen undistinguished in his first battle. The news of his death was fatal to his indulgent mother; and when she too died, Mrs. Allen blessed the Providence which, by throwing in her way a recommendation to Lady Lacy's school, had enabled her to support the dear object of her mistress's love and prayers. 'Had Miss Mowbray no connections?' was the natural question. 'Yes, one very near,—an aunt, the sister of her father, richly married in India. But Sir William was a proud and a stern man, upright in his own conduct, and implacable to error. Lady Ely was a sweet, gentle creature, and doubtless would be glad to extend a mother's protection to the orphan; but Sir William—oh, he was so unrelenting! He had abjured Mr. Mowbray, and all connected with him. She had written to inform them where the dear child was, but had no expectation of any answer from India.'

Time verified this prediction. The only tidings from India, at all interesting to Jane Mowbray, were contained in the paragraph of a newspaper which announced Lady Ely's death, and put an end to all hopes of protection in that quarter. Years passed on, and found her still with Mrs. Allen at Lady

Lacy's Green, more and more beloved and respected from day to day. She had now attained almost to womanhood. Strangers, I believe, called her plain; we, who knew her, thought her pretty. Her figure was tall and straight as a cypress, pliant and flexible as a willow, full of gentle grace, whether in repose or in motion. She had a profusion of light brown hair, a pale complexion, dark grey eyes, a smile of which the character was rather sweet than gay, and such a countenance! no one could look at her without wishing her well, or without being sure that she deserved all good wishes. Her manners were modest and elegant, and she had much of the self-taught knowledge, which is of all knowledge the surest and the best, because acquired with most difficulty, and fixed in the memory by the repetition of effort. Every one had assisted her to the extent of his power, and of her willingness to accept assistance; for both she and Mrs. Allen had a pride—call it independence—which rendered it impossible, even to the friends who were most honoured by their good opinion, to be as useful to them as they could have wished. To give Miss Mowbray time for improvement had, however, proved a powerful emollient to the pride of our dear schoolmistress; and that time had been so well employed, that her acquirements were considerable; whilst in mind and character she was truly admirable; mild, grateful, and affectionate, and imbued with a deep religious feeling, which influenced every action and pervaded every thought. So gifted, she was deemed by her constant friends, the vicar and his lady, perfectly competent to the care and education of children; it was agreed that she should enter a neighbouring family, as a successor to their then governess, early in the ensuing spring; and she,

although sad at the prospect of leaving her aged protectress, acquiesced in their decision.

One fine Sunday in the October preceding this dreaded separation, as Miss Mowbray, with Mrs. Allen leaning on her arm, was slowly following the little train of Lady Lacy's scholars from church, an elderly gentleman, sickly-looking and emaciated, accosted a pretty young woman, who was loitering with some other girls at the churchyard gate, and asked her several questions respecting the school and its mistress. Susan Wheeler (for it happened to be our old acquaintance) was delighted to be singled out by so grand a gentleman, and, being a kind-hearted creature in the main, spoke of the school-house and its inhabitants exactly as they deserved. 'Mrs. Allen,' she said, 'was the best woman in the world,—the very best, except just Miss Mowbray, who was better still, only too particular about summing, which you know, sir,' added Susan, 'people can't learn if they can't. She is going to be a governess in the spring,' continued the loquacious damsel; 'and it's to be hoped the little ladies will take kindly to their tables, or it will be a sad grievance to Miss Jane.' 'A governess! Where can I make inquiries concerning Miss Mowbray?' 'At the vicarage, sir,' answered Susan, dropping her little curtsy, and turning away, well pleased with the gentleman's condescension, and with half-a-crown which he had given her in return for her intelligence. The stranger meanwhile walked straight to the Vicarage, and in less than half an hour the vicar repaired with him to Lady Lacy's Green.

This stranger, so drooping, so sickly, so emaciated, was the proud Indian uncle, the stern Sir William Ely. Sickness and death had been busy with him

and with his. He had lost his health, his wife, and his children ; and, softened by affliction, was returned to England a new man, anxious to forgive and to be forgiven, and above all, desirous to repair his neglect and injustice toward the only remaining relative of the wife whom he had so fondly loved and so tenderly lamented. In this frame of mind, such a niece as Jane Mowbray was welcomed with no common joy. His delight in her, and his gratitude toward her protectress, were unbounded. He wished them both to accompany him home, and reside with him constantly. Jane promised to do so ; but Mrs. Allen, with her usual admirable feeling of propriety, clung to the spot which had been to her a 'city of refuge,' and refused to leave it in spite of all the entreaties of uncle and niece. It was a happy decision for Aberleigh ; for what could Aberleigh have done without its good schoolmistress ?

She lives there still, its ornament and its pride ; and every year Jane Mowbray comes for a long visit, and makes a holiday in the school and in the whole place. Jane Mowbray, did I say ? No ! not Jane Mowbray now. She has changed that dear name for the only name that could be dearer : she is married — married to the eldest son of Mr. Lacy, the lineal representative of Dame Eleanor Lacy, the honoured foundress of the school. It was in a voice tremulous more from feeling than from age that Mrs. Allen welcomed the young heir, when he brought his fair bride to Aberleigh ; and it was with a yet stronger and deeper emotion that the bridegroom, with his own Jane in his hand, visited the asylum which she and her venerable guardian owed to the benevolence and the piety of his ancestress, whose good deeds had thus showered down blessings on her remote posterity.



JUDITH KENT'S LODGER.

AT one end of the cluster of cottages and cottage-like houses which formed the little street of Hilton Cross, a pretty but secluded village in the south of England, stood the shop of Judith Kent, widow, 'licensed,' as the legend imported, 'to vend tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff.' Tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff formed, however, but a small part of the multifarious merchandise of Mrs. Kent, whose shop, the only repository of the hamlet, might have seemed an epitome of the wants and luxuries of humble life. In her window, candles, bacon, sugar, mustard, and soap flourished amidst calicoes, oranges, dolls, ribands, and gingerbread. Crockery-ware was piled on one side of her doorway, Dutch cheese and Irish butter encumbered the other; brooms and brushes rested against the wall; and ropes of onions and bunches of red herrings hung from the ceiling. She sold bread, butcher's meat, and garden-stuff, on commission; and engrossed, at a word, the whole trade of Hilton Cross.

Notwithstanding this monopoly, the world went ill with poor Judith. She was a mild, pleasant-looking, middle-aged woman, with a heart too soft for her calling. She could not say 'no' to the poor creatures who came to her on a Saturday night to seek bread

for their children, however deep they might already be in her debt, or however certain it was that their husbands were, at that moment, spending at the Chequers or the Four Horse-shoes the money that should have supported their wives and families; for in this village, as in others, there were two flourishing alehouses, although but one ill-accustomed shop,—‘but one halfpenny-worth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack!’

She could not say ‘no,’ as a prudent woman might have said; and accordingly half the poor people in the parish might be found on her books, whilst she herself was gradually getting in arrears with her baker, her grocer, and her landlord. Her family consisted of two children,—Mary, a pretty, fair-haired, smiling lass of twelve or thirteen; and Robert, a fine youth, nearly ten years older, who worked in the gardens of a neighbouring gentleman. Robert, conscious that his mother’s was no gainful trade, often pressed her to give up business, sell off her stock, relinquish her house, and depend on his labour for her support; but of this she would not hear.

Many motives mingled in her determination: a generous reluctance to burden her dutiful son with her maintenance, a natural fear of losing *caste* among her neighbours, a strong love of the house which for five-and-twenty years had been her home, a vague hope that times would mend and all come right again (wiser persons than Mrs. Kent have lulled reason to sleep with such an opiate!), and, above all, a want of courage to look her difficulties fairly in the face. Besides, she liked her occupation, its petty consequence, its bustle, and its gossipry; and she had a sense of gain in the small peddling bargains, the pennyworths of needles, and balls of cotton, and rows

of pins, and yards of tape, which she was accustomed to vend for ready money, that overbalanced, for the moment, her losses and her debts ; so that, in spite of her son's presages and warnings, the shop continued in full activity.

In addition to his forebodings respecting his mother, Robert had another misfortune,—the poor youth was in love.

About a quarter of a mile down the shady lane which ran by one side of Mrs. Kent's dwelling, was the pretty farm-house, orchard, and homestead of Farmer Bell, whose eldest daughter Susan, the beauty of the parish, was the object of a passion almost amounting to idolatry. And, in good sooth, Susan Bell was well fitted to inspire such a passion. Besides a light graceful figure, moulded with the exactest symmetry, she had a smiling, innocent countenance, a complexion coloured like the brilliant blossoms of the balsam, and hair of a shining golden brown, like the fruit of the horse-chestnut. Her speech was at once modest and playful, her temper sweet, and her heart tender. She loved Robert dearly, although he often gave her cause to wish that she loved him not ; for Robert was subject to the intermitting fever called jealousy, causelessly—as he himself would declare, when a remission of the disease gave room for his natural sense to act—causelessly and penitently, but still pertinaciously jealous.

I have said that he was a fine young man, tall, dark, and slender ; I should add that he was a good son, a kind brother, a pattern of sobriety and industry, and possessed of talent and acquirement far beyond his station. But there was about him an ardour, a vigour, a fiery restlessness, commonly held proper to the

natives of the south of Europe, but which may be found sometimes amongst our own peasantry ; all his pursuits, whether of sport or labour, took the form of passion. At ten years old he had far outstripped his fellow-pupils at the Foundation School, to which, through the kindness of the squire of the parish, his mother had been enabled to send him ; at eighteen he was the best cricketer, the best flute-player, the best bell-ringer, and the best gardener in the county ; and some odd volumes of Shakspeare having come into his possession, there was some danger at twenty of his turning out a dramatic poet, had not the kind discouragement of his master, to whom some of his early scenes were shown by his patron and admirer, the head-gardener, acted as a salutary check. Indeed, so strong at one time was the poetical *furor*, that such a catastrophe as an entire play might probably have ensued, notwithstanding Mr. Lescombe's judicious warnings, had not love, the master-passion, fallen about this time in poor Robert's way, and engrossed all the ardour of his ardent temperament.

The beauty and playfulness of his mistress, whilst they enchanted his fancy, kept the jealous irritability of his nature in perpetual alarm. He suspected a lover in every man who approached her ; and the firm refusal of her father to sanction their union till her impatient lover was a little more forward in the world, completed his disquiet. Affairs were in this posture when a new personage arrived at Hilton Cross.

In addition to her other ways and means, Mrs. Kent tried to lessen her rent by letting lodgings, and the neat, quiet, elderly gentlewoman, the widow of a long-deceased rector, who had occupied her rooms ever since Robert was born, being at last gathered to her fathers, an advertisement of 'Pleasant Apartments

to be let in the airy Village of Hilton Cross ' appeared in the county paper. This announcement was as true as if it had not formed an advertisement in a country newspaper. Very airy *was* the pretty village of Hilton Cross, with its breezy uplands, and its open common, dotted, as it were, with cottages and clumps of trees ; and very pleasant *were* Mrs. Kent's apartments, for those who had sufficient taste to appreciate their rustic simplicity, and sufficient humility to overlook their smallness. The little chamber glittering with whiteness, its snowy dimity bed, and ' fresh sheets smelling of lavender ; ' the sitting-room, a thought larger, carpeted with India matting, its shining cane-chairs, and its bright casement, wreathed on one side by a luxuriant jasmine, on the other by the tall cluster musk-rose, sending its bunches of odorous blossoms into the very window ; the little flower-court underneath, full of hollyhocks, cloves, and dahlias ; and the large sloping meadow beyond, leading up to Farmer Bell's tall, irregular house, half-covered with a flaunting vine, his barns and ricks, and orchard,—all this formed an apartment too tempting to remain long untenanted in the bright month of August ; accordingly it was almost immediately engaged by a gentleman in black, who walked over one fair morning, paid ten pounds as a deposit, sent for his trunk from the next town, and took possession on the instant.

Her new inmate, who, without positively declining to give his name, had yet contrived to evade all the questions Mrs. Kent could devise, proved a perpetual source of astonishment, not only to herself, but also to her neighbours.

He was a well-made little man, near upon forty ; with considerable terseness of feature, a forehead of great power, whose effect was increased by a slight

baldness on the top of the head, and an eye like a falcon. Such an eye ! It seemed to go through you, to strike all that it looked upon like a *coup-de-soleil*. Luckily the stranger was so merciful as generally to wear spectacles, under cover of which those terrible eyes might see and be seen without danger.

His habits were as peculiar as his appearance. He was moderate, and rather fanciful, in his diet ; drank nothing but water or strong coffee, made, as Mrs. Kent observed, very wastefully ; and had, as she also remarked, a great number of heathenish-looking books scattered about the apartment,—Lord Berner's *Froissart*, for instance, Sir Thomas Brown's *Urn Burial*, the Baskerville *Ariosto*, Goethe's *Faust*, a Spanish *Don Quixote*, and an interleaved Philoctetes, full of outline drawings. The greater part of his time was spent out of doors. He would even ramble away for three or four days together, with no other companion than a boy, hired in the village, to carry what Mrs. Kent denominated his odds and ends, which odds and ends consisted for the most part of an angling rod and a sketching apparatus,—our incognito being, as my readers have by this time probably discovered, no other than an artist on his summer progress.

Robert speedily understood the stranger, and was delighted with the opportunity of approaching so gifted a person ; although he contemplated, with a degree of generous envy, which a king's regalia would have failed to excite in his bosom, those *chefs-d'œuvres* of all nations, which were to him as 'sealed books,' and the pencils, whose power seemed to him little less than creative. He redoubled his industry in the garden, that he might conscientiously devote hours and half-hours to pointing out the deep pools and shallow eddies of the romantic stream, where he

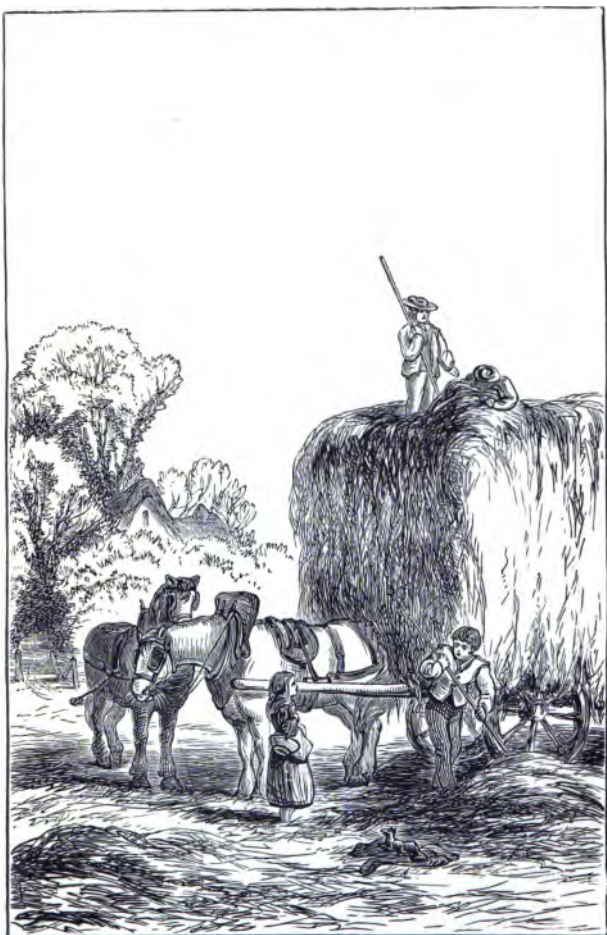
knew from experience (for Robert, amongst his other accomplishments, was no mean 'brother of the angle') the fish were likely to be found ; and, better still, he loved to lead to the haunts of his childhood, the wild bosky dells, and the sunny ends of lanes, where a sudden turn in the track, an overhanging tree, an old gate, a cottage chimney, and a group of cattle or children, had sometimes formed a picture on which his mind had fed for hours.

It was Robert's chief pleasure to entice his lodger to scenes such as these, and to see his own visions growing into reality under the glowing pencil of the artist ; and he, in his turn, would admire and marvel at the natural feeling of the beautiful, which could lead an uninstructed country youth instinctively to the very elements of the picturesque. A general agreement of taste has brought about a degree of association unusual between persons so different in rank ; a particular instance of this accordance dissolved the intimacy.

Robert had been, for above a fortnight, more than commonly busy in Mr. Lescombe's gardens and hot-houses, so busy that he even slept at the Hall ; the stranger, on the other hand, had been during the same period shut up, painting, in the little parlour. At last they met ; and the artist invited his young friend to look at the picture which had engaged him during his absence. On walking into the room, he saw on the easel a picture in oils almost finished. The style was of that delightful kind which combined figures with landscape ; the subject was 'Hay-carrying,' and the scene that very sloping meadow, crowned by Farmer Bell's tall, irregular house, its vine-wreathed porch and chimneys, the great walnut tree before the door, the orchard, and the homestead, which formed

the actual prospect from the windows before them. In the foreground was a waggon piled with hay, surrounded by the farmer and his family,—some pitching, some loading, some raking after, all intent on their pleasant business. The only disengaged persons in the field were young Mary Kent and Harry Bell, an urchin of four years old, who rode on her knee on the top of the waggon, crowned and wreathed with garlands of vine leaves, and bind-weed, and poppies, and corn-flowers. In the front, looking up at Mary Kent and her little brother, and playfully tossing to them the lock of hay which she had gathered on her rake, stood Susan Bell, her head thrown back, her bonnet half off, her light and lovely figure shown, in all its grace, by the pretty attitude and the short cool dress ; while her sweet face, glowing with youth and beauty, had a smile playing over it like a sun-beam. The boy was nodding and laughing to her, and seemed longing—as well he might—to escape from his flowery bondage, and jump into her arms. Never had poet framed a lovelier image of rural beauty ! Never had painter more felicitously realized his conception !

‘Well, Robert,’ exclaimed our artist, a little impatient of the continued silence, and missing the expected praise. ‘Well !’ But still Robert spoke not. ‘Don’t you think it a good subject?’ continued the man of the easel. ‘I was sitting at the window reading *Froissart* whilst they were carrying the after-crop, and by good luck happened to look up just as they had arranged themselves into this very group, and as the evening sun came slanting, exactly as it does now, across the meadow ; so I dashed in the sketch instantly, got Mary to sit to me,—and a very pretty nymph-like figure she makes,—dressed the boy with



‘In the foreground was a waggon piled with hay.’—

VILLAGE TALES AND SKETCHES, *page 4*

flowers, just as he was decked out for the harvest home,—the rogue is really a fit model for a Cupid; they are a glorious family,—and persuaded Susan'—at that name, Robert, unable to control himself longer, rushed out of the room, leaving the astonished painter in the full belief that his senses had forsaken him.

The unhappy lover, agonized by jealousy, pursued his way to the farm. He had hitherto contrived, although without confessing his motive, even to himself, to keep his friend and his mistress asunder. He had no fears of her virtue or of his honour, but to Robert's romantic simplicity it seemed that no one could gaze on Susan without feeling ardent love, and that such a man as the artist could never love in vain. Besides, in the conversations which they had held together, he had dwelt on beauty and simplicity as the most attractive points of female character. Robert had felt, as he spoke, that Susan was the very being whom he described, and had congratulated himself that they were still unacquainted. But now they had met; he had seen, he had studied, had transferred to canvas that matchless beauty; had conquered the timidity, which to Robert had always seemed unconquerable; had won her to admit his gaze; had tamed that shyest, coyest dove; had become familiar with that sweetest face, and that dearest form;—oh, the very thought was agony!

In this mood he arrived at the farm; and there, working at her needle under the vine-wreathed porch, with the evening sun shining full upon her, and her little brother playing at her feet, sat his own Susan. She heard his rapid step, and advanced to meet him with a smile and a blush of delight, just the smile and blush of the picture. At such a moment they increased his misery. He repulsed her offered

hand, and poured forth a torrent of questions on the subject which possessed his mind. Her innocent answers were fuel to his frenzy. 'The picture! had he seen the picture? and was it not pretty? much too pretty, she thought, but everybody called it like! And Mary and Harry,—was not he pleased with them? What a wonderful thing it was to make a bit of canvas so like living creatures! and what a wonderful man the strange gentleman was! She had been afraid of him at first,—sadly afraid of those two bright eyes; and so had Harry,—poor Harry had cried!—but he was so merry and so kind, that neither of them minded sitting to him now! And she was so glad that Robert had seen the picture! she had so wanted him to see it! it was too pretty, to be sure,—but then Robert would not mind that. She had told the gentleman'— 'Go to the gentleman now,' interrupted Robert, 'and tell him that I relinquish you! It will be welcome news! Go to him, Susan! your heart is with him! Go to him, I say!' and throwing from him, with a bitter laugh, the frightened and weeping girl, who had laid her trembling hand on his arm to detain him, he darted from the door, and returned to his old quarters at the Hall.

Another fortnight passed, and Robert still kept aloof from his family and his home. His mother and sister indeed occasionally saw him; and sad accounts had poor little Mary to give to her friend Susan of Robert's ill looks and worse spirits. And Susan listened, and said she did not care; and burst into a passion of tears, and said she was very happy; and vowed never to speak to him again, and desired Mary never to mention her to him, or him to her, and then asked her a hundred questions respecting his looks, and his words, and his illness, and charged her with

a thousand tender messages, which in the next breath she withdrew. And Mary, too young to understand the inconsistencies of love, pitied and comforted, and thought it 'passing strange.'

In the meantime misfortunes of a different kind were gathering round Mrs. Kent. The mealman and baker, whose bread she vended, her kindest friend and largest creditor, died, leaving his affairs in the hands of an attorney of the next town, the pest and terror of the neighbourhood; and so, on the same day, she received two letters from this formidable lawyer, one on account of his dead client the baker, the other on behalf of his living client the grocer, who ranked next amongst her creditors, both threatening that if their respective claims were not liquidated on or before a certain day, proceedings would be commenced against her forthwith.

It is in such a situation that woman most feels her helplessness, especially that forlorn creature whom the common people, adopting the pathetic language of Scripture, designate by the expressive phrase, 'a lone woman!' Poor Judith sat down to cry, in powerless sorrow and vain self-pity. She opened, indeed, her hopeless day-book, but she knew too well that her debtors could not pay. She had no one to consult, for her lodger, in whose general cleverness she had great confidence, had been absent, on one of his excursions, almost as long as her son, and time pressed upon her, for the letters, sent with the usual indirectness of country conveyance, originally given to the carrier, confided by the carrier to the buttermilkman, carried on by the buttermilkman to the next village, left for three days at a public-house, and finally delivered at Hilton Cross by a return post-boy, had been nearly a week on the road. Saturday was the

day fixed for payment, and this was Friday night; and Michaelmas and rent-day were approaching! And, unable even to look at this accumulation of misery, poor Judith laid her head on her fruitless account-book, and sobbed aloud!

It was with a strangely mingled feeling of comfort in such a son, and sorrow so to grieve him, that she heard Robert's voice at her side, asking tenderly what ailed her. She put the letters into his hands; and he, long prepared for the blow, soothed and cheered her. 'All must be given up,' he said, 'and he would go with her the next day to make over the whole property. Let us pay as far as our means go, mother,' pursued he; 'and do not fear but, some day or other, we shall be able to discharge all our debts. God will speed an honest purpose. In the meantime, Mr. Lescombe will give us a cottage,—I know he will,—and I shall work for you and Mary. It will be something to live for, something worth living for. Be comforted, dear mother!' He stooped as he said this, and kissed her; and when he arose, he saw Susan standing opposite to him, and behind her the stranger. They had entered separately during the conversation between the mother and son, and Susan was still unconscious of the artist's presence.

She stood in great agitation, pressing Mary's hand (from whom she had heard the story), and immediately began questioning Mrs. Kent as to the extent of the calamity. She had twenty pounds of her own, that her grandmother had left her; but a hundred! did they want a whole hundred? and would they send Mrs. Kent to prison? and sell her goods? and turn Mary out of doors? and Robert? Oh, how ill Robert looked! It would kill Robert! 'Oh,' continued Susan, wringing her hands, 'I would sell

myself for a bondwoman, I would be like a negro slave, for one hundred pounds !' 'Would you ?' said the stranger, advancing suddenly from the door, and producing two bank-bills ; 'would you ? Well, we strike a bargain. I will give you two hundred pounds for this little hand, only this little hand !' 'What do you mean, sir ?' exclaimed Mrs. Kent ; 'what can you mean ?' 'Nothing but what is fair and honourable,' returned her lodger : 'let Susan promise to meet me at church to-morrow, and here are two hundred pounds to dispose of at her pleasure to-night.' 'Susan ! my dear Susan !' 'Let her alone, mother !' interrupted Robert ; 'she must choose for herself !' and for a few moments there was a dead silence. Robert stood leaning against the wall, pale as marble, his eyes cast down, and his lips compressed, in a state of forced composure ; Mrs. Kent, her head turning now towards the bank-notes, and now towards her son, was in a state of restless and uncontrollable instability ; Mary clung, crying, about her mother ; and Susan, her colour varying, and her lips quivering, sat unconsciously twisting and untwisting the bank-notes in her hand.

'Well, Susan !' said the artist, who had remained in tranquil expectation, surveying the group with his falcon eye ; 'well, Susan, have you determined ?' The colour rose to her temples, and she answered firmly, 'Yes, sir. Be pleased to take back the notes. I love nobody but Robert, and Robert loves me dearly, dearly ! I know he does ! Oh, Mrs. Kent ! you would not have me vex Robert, your own dear son, and he so ill,—would you ? Let them take these things !—they never can be so cruel as to put you in prison,—you who were always so kind to everybody ; and he will work for you ! and I will work for you !


Never mind being poor! better anything than be false-hearted to my Robert!' 'God for ever bless you, my Susan!' 'God bless you, my dear child!' burst at once from Robert and his mother, as they alternately folded her in their arms.

'Pray take the notes, sir,' repeated Susan, after a short interval. 'No! that I will not do,' replied the stranger, smiling. 'The notes shall be yours,—are yours,—and what is more, on my own conditions! Meet me at church to-morrow morning, and I shall have the pleasure of bestowing this pretty hand, as I always intended, on my good friend Robert here. I have a wife of my own at home, my dear, whom I would not exchange even for you; and I am quite rich enough to afford myself the luxury of making you happy. Besides, you have a claim to the money. Those very bank-notes were gained by that sweet face! Your friend Mr. Lescombe, Robert, has purchased 'The Hay-carrying.' We have had a good deal of talk about you, and I am quite certain that he will provide for you all. No thanks!' continued he, interrupting something that Robert was going to say; 'no thanks! no apologies! I won't hear a word. Meet me at church to-morrow! but remember, young man, no more jealousy!' and, followed by a glance from Susan, of which Robert might have been jealous, the artist left the shop.





THE MAGPIES.

OME along, girls! Helen! Caroline! I say, don't stand jabbering there upon the stairs, but come down this instant, or Dash and I will be off without you.'

This elegant speech was shouted from the bottom of the great staircase at Dinely Hall, by young George Dinely, an Etonian of eleven years old, just come home for the holidays, to his two younger sisters, who stood disputing very ardently in French at the top. The cause of contention was, to say the truth, no greater an object than the colour of a work-bag, which they were about to make for their mamma,—slate lined with pink being the choice of Miss Caroline, whilst Miss Helen preferred drab with a blue lining.

'Don't stand there quarrelling about the colour of your trumpery,' added George, 'but come along!'

Now George would have scorned to know a syllable of any language except Latin and Greek, but neither of the young ladies being Frenchwomen enough to construe the appellation of the leading article, the words 'drab' and 'slate,' which came forth in native English pretty frequently, as well as the silk dangling in their hands, had enlightened him as to the matter in dispute.

George was a true schoolboy, rough and kind; affecting perhaps more roughness than naturally belonged to him, from a mistaken notion that it made him look bold, and English, and manly. There cannot be a greater mistake, since the boldest man is commonly the mildest, thus realizing in every way the expression of Shakspeare, which has been the subject of a somewhat unnecessary commentary: 'He's gentle and not fearful.' For the rest, our hero loved his sisters, which was very right; and loved to tease them, which was very wrong; and now he and his dog Dash, both wild with spirits and with happiness, were waiting most impatiently to go down to the village on a visit to old Nurse Simmons and her magpie.

Nurse Simmons was a very good and very cross old woman, who, after ruling in the nursery of Dinely Hall for two generations, scolding and spoiling Sir Edward and his brothers, and performing, thirty years afterwards, the same good office for Master George and his sisters, had lately abdicated her throne on the arrival of a French governess, and was now comfortably settled at a cottage of her own in the village street.

George Dinely and Dash had already that morning visited George's own pony, and his father's brood mares, the garden, the stables, the pheasantry, the greenhouse, and the farm-yard; had seen a brood of curious bantams, two litters of pigs, and a family of greyhound puppies; and had few friends, old or new, left to visit except Nurse Simmons, her cottage and her magpie, a bird of such accomplishments that his sisters had even made it the subject of a letter to Eton. The magpie might perhaps claim an equal share with his mistress in George's impatience; and

Dash, always eager to get out of doors, seemed nearly as fidgety as his young master.

Dash was as beautiful a dog as one should see in a summer's day, one of the large old English spaniels, which are now so rare ; with a superb head, like those you see in Spanish pictures ; and such ears ! they more than met over his pretty spotted nose ; and when he lapped his milk, dipped into his pan at least two inches. His hair was long, and shiny, and wavy, not curly, partly of a rich dark liver colour, partly of a silvery white, and beautifully feathered about the legs and thighs. Everybody used to wonder that Dash, who apparently ate so little, should be in such good case ; but the marvel was by no means so great as it seemed, for his being George's peculiar pet and property did not hinder his being the universal favourite of the whole house, from the drawing-room to the kitchen. Not a creature could resist Dash's silent supplications at meal-times, when he sat upon his haunches looking amiable, with his large ears brought into their most becoming position, his head a little on one side, and his beautiful eyes fixed on your face, with as near an approach to speech as ever eyes made in the world. From Sir Edward and her Ladyship down to the stable-boy and the kitchen-maid, no inhabitant of Dinely Hall could resist Dash ; so that, being a dog of most apprehensive sagacity with regard to the hours appropriated to the several refectations of the family, he usually contrived, between the dining parlour, the school-room, and the servants' hall, to partake of three breakfasts and as many dinners every day, to say nothing of an occasional snap at luncheon or supper-time. No wonder that Dash was in high condition. His good plight, however, had by no means impaired his activity. On the

contrary, he was extremely lively as well as intelligent, and had a sort of circular motion, a way of flinging himself quite round on his hind feet, something after the fashion in which the French dancers twirl themselves round on one leg, which not only showed unusual agility in a dog of his size, but gave token of the same spirit and animation which sparkled in his bright hazel eye. Anything of eagerness or impatience was sure to excite this motion, and George Dinely gravely assured his sisters, when they at length joined him in the hall, that Dash had flung himself round six-and-twenty times whilst waiting the conclusion of their quarrel.

Getting out into the lawn and the open air did not tend to diminish Dash's glee or his capers, and the young party walked merrily on; George telling of school pranks and school misfortunes,—the having lost or spoilt four hats since Easter seemed rather to belong to the first class of adventures than the second,—his sisters listening dutifully and wonderingly; and Dash following his own devices, now turning up a mouse's nest from a water furrow in the park, now springing a covey of young partridges in a corn-field, now plunging his whole hairy person in the brook, and now splashing Miss Helen from head to foot by ungallantly jumping over her whilst crossing a stile, being thereunto prompted by a whistle from his young master, who had, with equal want of gallantry, leapt the stile first himself and left his sisters to get over as they could; until at last the whole party, having passed the stile, and crossed the bridge, and turned the churchyard corner, found themselves in the shady recesses of the Vicarage lane, and in full view of the vine-covered cottage of Nurse Simmons.

As they advanced they heard a prodigious chatter-

ing and jabbering, and soon got near enough to ascertain that the sound proceeded mainly from one of the parties they were come to visit,—Nurse Simmons' magpie. He was perched in the middle of the road, defending a long dirty bare bone of mutton, doubtless his property, on one end of which he stood, whilst the other extremity was occupied by a wild bird of the same species, who between pecking at the bone, and fighting, and scolding, found full employment. The wild magpie was a beautiful creature, as wild magpies are, of a snowy white and a fine blue black, perfect in shape and plumage, and so superior in appearance to the tame bird, ragged, dragged, and dirty, that they hardly seemed of the same kind. Both were chattering away most furiously, the one in his natural and unintelligible gibberish, the other partly in his native tongue and partly in that for his skill in which he was so eminent,—thus turning his accomplishments to an unexpected account, and larding his own lean speech with divers foreign garnishes, such as, 'What's o'clock?' and 'How do you do?' and 'Very well, I thank you,' and 'Poor pretty Mag!' and 'Mag's a good bird,' all delivered in the most vehement accent, and all doubtless understood by the unlearned adversary as terms of reproach.

'What can those two magpies be quarrelling about?' said Caroline, as soon as she could speak for laughing; for on the children's approach the birds had abandoned the mutton bone, which had been quietly borne away by Dash, who, in spite of his usual sumptuous fare, had no objection to such a windfall, and was lying in great state on a mossy bank discussing and enjoying the stolen morsel.

'What a fury they are in! I wish I knew what they were saying!' pursued Caroline, as the squabble

grew every moment more angry and less intelligible.

'They are talking nonsense, doubtless, as people commonly do when they quarrel,' quoth George, 'and act wisely to clothe it in a foreign tongue. Perhaps they may be disputing about colours.'

'What an odd noise it is!' continued Caroline, by no means disposed to acknowledge her brother's compliment; 'I never heard anything like it.'

'I have,' said George drily.

'I wonder whether they comprehend each other!' ejaculated Miss Helen, following her sister's example, and taking no notice of the provoking George; 'they really do seem to understand.'

'As well as other magpies,' observed the young gentleman; 'why should they not?'

'But what strange gibberish!' added poor Helen.

'Gibberish, Miss Helen! Don't you hear that the birds are sputtering magpie French, sprinkled with a little magpie English? I was just going to ask you to explain it to me,' replied the unmerciful George. 'It is quite a parody upon your work-bag squabble,' pursued their tormentor; 'only that the birds are the wiser, for I see they are parting,—the wild one flying away, the tame gentleman hopping towards us. Quite the scene of the work-bag over again,' continued George, 'only with less noise, and much shortened,—an abridged and corrected edition! Really, young ladies, the magpies have the best of it,' said the Etonian, and off he stalked into Nurse Simmons' cottage.





HARRY LEWINGTON.

BEG, Frisk, beg !' said little Harry Lewington, as he sat in state on an inverted basket at his grandmother's door, discussing with great satisfaction a huge porringer of bread and milk, whilst his sister Lucy, who had already despatched her breakfast, sat on the ground opposite to him, now twisting the long wreaths of the convolvulus major into garlands, now throwing them away. 'Beg, Frisk, beg !' repeated Harry, holding a bit of bread just out of the dog's reach ; and the obedient Frisk squatted himself on his hind legs, and held up his fore-paws in patient supplication, until it pleased Master Harry to bestow upon him the tempting morsel.

The little boy and the little dog were great friends, notwithstanding that Harry, in the wantonness of power, would sometimes tease and tantalize his poor pet more than a good boy should have done. Frisk loved him dearly, much better than he did Lucy, although Lucy gave him every day part of her breakfast without making him beg, and would tie pretty ribands round his neck, and pat and stroke his rough head for half an hour together. Harry was Frisk's prime favourite,—perhaps because the little dog, being himself of a merry disposition, liked the boy's lively

play better than the girl's gentle caresses; perhaps because he recollected that Harry was his earliest patron and firmest friend during a time of great trouble, quadrupeds of his species having a knack of remembering past kindness, which it would do the biped called man no harm to copy.

Poor Frisk had come as a stray dog to Aberleigh. If he could have told his own story, it would probably have been a very pitiful one, of distress and wanderings, of 'hunger and foul weather,' of kicks and cuffs, and all 'the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes.' Certain it is that he made his appearance at Mrs. Lewington's door in miserable plight, wet, dirty, and half-starved; that there he encountered Harry, who took an immediate fancy to him, and Mrs. Lewington, who drove him off with a broom; that a violent dispute ensued between the good dame and her grandson, Harry persisting in inviting him in, Mrs. Lewington in frightening him away; that at first it ended in Frisk's being established as a sort of out-door pensioner, subsisting on odds and ends, stray bones, and cold potatoes, surreptitiously obtained for him by his young protector, and sleeping in the identical basket which, turned topsy-turvy, afterwards served Harry for a seat; until at length Mrs. Lewington, who had withstood the incessant importunity of the patron, and the persevering humility of his client, was propitiated by Frisk's own doggish exploit in barking away a set of pilferers, who were making an attack on her great pear tree, and so frightening the thieves, that they not only scampered off in all haste, but left behind them their implements of thievery,—a ladder, two baskets, and a sack,—the good dame being thus actually a gainer by the intended robbery, and so well satisfied with Frisk's conduct, that she

not only admitted him into her house, but considered him as one of her most vigilant and valuable inmates, worth all the watchmen that ever sprung a rattle.

The new guard proved to be a four-footed person of singular accomplishments. He could fetch or carry, either by land or by water ; would pick up her thimble or cotton, if his old mistress happened to drop them ; carry Lucy's little pattens to school in case of a shower ; or take Harry's dinner to the same place with unimpeachable honesty. Moreover, he was so strong on his hind legs, walked upright so firmly and gracefully, cut so many capers, and had so good an ear for music, that the more sagacious amongst the neighbours suspected him of having been at least the principal performer in a company of dancing dogs, even if he were not the learned dog Munito himself. Frisk and his exploits were the wonder of Aberleigh, where he had now resided a twelvemonth (for August was come round again), with honour and credit to himself, and perfect satisfaction to all parties.

'Beg, Frisk, beg !' said Harry, and gave him, after long waiting, the expected morsel ; and Frisk was contented, but Harry was not. The little boy, though a good-humoured fellow in the main, had fits of naughtiness which were apt to last all day, and this promised to be one of his worst. It was a holiday, moreover, when he had nothing to do but to be naughty, and in the afternoon his cousins Susan and William were to come and see him and Lucy, and the pears were to be gathered, and the children to have a treat ; and Harry, in his impatience, thought the morning would never be over, and played such pranks by way of beguiling the time,—buffeting Frisk, for instance, burning his own fingers, cutting the

curls off his sister's doll's flaxen wig, and finally breaking his grandmother's spectacles,—that before his visitors arrived, indeed almost immediately after dinner, he contrived to get sent to bed in disgrace.

Poor Harry! There he lay sprawling, kicking, and roaring, whilst Susan and William and Lucy were happily busy about the fine mellow Windsor pears; William up the tree gathering and shaking, Lucy and Susan catching them in their pinafores, and picking them up from the ground; now piling the rich fruit into the great baskets that the thieves had left behind; and now, happy urchins, eating at discretion of the nicest and ripest; Frisk barking gaily amongst them as if he were eating Windsor pears too.

Poor Harry! He could hear all their glee and merriment through the open window as he lay in bed, and the storm of passion having subsided into a gentle rain of self-pity, there he lay weeping and disconsolate, a grievous sob bursting forth every now and then as he heard the loud peal of childish laughter, and thought how he should have laughed, and how happy he should have been, and wondered whether his grandmother would so far relent as to let him get up to supper, and whether Lucy would be so good-natured as to bring him a pear. 'It will be very ill-natured if she does not,' thought Harry, and the poor boy's tears burst out anew. All on a sudden he heard a little foot on the stair, pit-a-pat, and thought she was coming. Pit-a-pat came the foot nearer and nearer, and at last a small head peeped, half afraid, through the half-open door. But it was not Lucy's head; it was Frisk's,—poor Frisk, whom Harry had been teasing all the morning, and who now came into the room wagging his tail, with a great

pear in his mouth, jumped on the bed, and laid it in the little boy's hand.

NOTE.—They who are accustomed to dogs whose sagacity has been improved by domestication and good society, will not be surprised at the foregoing anecdote. Cowper's story of the water-lily is quite a case in point ; and a greyhound of my acquaintance, whose favourite playground was a large orchard, used regularly to bring the fallen apples to his mistress, was particularly anxious to go there after a windy night, and seemed to take singular pleasure in the amusement. This might be imitation ; but an exploit of my own lamented and beautiful Mayflower can hardly be traced to such an origin. Poor May, in common with most pet dogs, generally cared little for the persons whose duty it was to feed and attend upon her ; she seemed to know that it was their place, and received their services with calm and aristocratic civility, reserving all demonstration of affection for her friends of the parlour. One of her attendants, however, a lively, good-humoured boy called Tom, she honoured with a considerable share of her attention, liked his company, and, to the astonishment of the whole household, certainly liked him,—a partiality which Tom returned with interest, combing and caressing her whenever opportunity offered. Master Tom was a celebrated player at marbles, and May was accustomed to stand at his side watching or seeming to watch the game. One afternoon she jumped over the half-hatch into the stable, evidently in search of her friend Tom,—no Tom was there ; raced round the garden,—still in vain ; peeped into the kitchen,—Tom was as much to seek as ever. The maids, who saw that she had something in her mouth, and were amused by her earnest, searching air,

tried to detain her or to decoy her into the parlour, but without the slightest success. On she went from chaise-house to wood-house, from wood-house to coal-house, from coal-house to cart-house, until she caught a well-known sound from the knife-board, and, opening a door in the way, darted on the astonished Tom (whose fright at the apparition cost one of our best carving forks, which he broke in his surprise), and deposited in his hand a marble, which, as we afterwards found, she had picked up in the road, following up her present by a series of capers and gambols the most joyous and triumphant that can be imagined.





PRIDE SHALL HAVE A FALL.

‘**DO** you Aberleigh boys are about to play Sandleford,’ said George Leslie to Horace Lucas : ‘have you a good eleven?’

‘Our players are pretty fair, I believe,’ replied Horace, ‘but the number is short. Both sides have agreed to take a mate or two from other parishes, and I rode over to ask your cousin Charles and yourself to join our Aberleigh party.’

‘Faith ! you are in luck, my good friend,’ cried George Leslie ; ‘you may look upon the game as won. Charles, to be sure, is no great hand ; can’t bowl, hits up, and a bad field,—a slow, awkward field. But I,—did you never see me play ? And I am so improved this season ! I ought to be improved, for I have seen such play, and such players ! I am just returned from my aunt’s, who lives within a mile of Bramshill,—Sir John’s, you know,—and there were all the great men of the day, all the Lord’s men : Mr. Ward, and Mr. Budd,—I’m thought to stand at my wicket very much like Mr. Budd ; Saunders, who is reckoned, take him all in all, the best player in England,—Saunders, and Broadbridge the Sussex bowler,—I don’t patronize their system though, I stick to the old steady, scientific game ; Lord Frederick, and Mr. Knight,—he’s a fine figure of a man is Mr. Knight, the finest

figure of any of them, and very great in the field ; old Howard the bowler,—he's my model ; and, in short, almost every celebrated cricketer in England. I know that you Westminsters think that nobody can do anything so well as yourselves ; but as far as cricket goes, ask Charles, he'll tell you that you are in luck to have me.' And off the young gentleman strutted to pay his compliments to some ladies who were talking to his mother on the other side of the lawn ; for this conversation took place on a fine day in July, under the heavy shadow of some tall elms, in Mrs. Leslie's beautiful grounds.

George's speech had been delivered in a high, solemn, vaunting tone, as grave as Don Quixote ; but of the two who remained, Horace, a quick, arch, lively lad, laughed outright, and Charles, a mild, fair, delicate boy, could not help smiling.

'He gives himself a comfortable character, however,' said Horace, 'rather too good to be true ; whilst of you he speaks modestly enough. Are you so bad, Charles ? And is he such a paragon of cricketers ? Does he bat like Mr. Budd, and field like Mr. Knight, and bowl like Howard ?'

'Why, not exactly,' was the reply ; 'but there's more truth than you think for. He's a good but uncertain player ; and I am a bad one, a very bad one,—shy and timid and awkward, always feeling when the game is over that I could have done better ; just as I have felt when a clever man—your father, for instance—has had the goodness to speak to me, how much better I ought to have talked. Somehow the power never comes at the right time at either game ; so that I may say, as some people say of cucumbers, that I like cricket, but that cricket does not like me.'

'Good or bad, my dear fellow, I'll take you,' said Horace, 'nervousness and all. It's a pity that you two cousins could not make over one to another some parcel of your several qualities: you would be much the happier for a dash of George's self-conceit, and he could spare enough to set up a whole regiment of dandies; whilst he would be all the better for your superfluous modesty. However, I'll take you both, right thankfully.' And the arrangements were entered into forthwith. They were to meet on the ground on the ensuing morning to play the match, different engagements preventing the Leslies from practising with the Aberleigh side that evening, as Horace had wished and intended; for our friend Horace, ardent and keen in everything, whether of sport or study, had set his heart on winning this match, and was very desirous of trying the powers of his new allies. Fifty times during the evening did he count over his own good players, and the good players of the other side, and gravely conclude, 'It will all depend on the Leslies. How I wish to-morrow were come!' He said this so often, that even his sister Emily, although the most indulgent person in the world, and very fond of her brother, grew so tired of hearing him, that she could not help saying, 'I wish to-morrow were come too!'

And at last, as generally happens, whether we wish for it or not, to-morrow did come, as brilliant a to-morrow as ever was anticipated, even by a school-boy in the holidays. The sun rose without a cloud. I speak from the best authority, for, 'scorning the scorner sleep,' Horace was up before him; and the ball being twenty times weighed and the bats fifty times examined, he repaired, by half-past nine, to Sandleford Common, where the match was to be

played, and the wickets pitched precisely at ten o'clock.

All parties were sufficiently punctual; and when the whole set had assembled, Horace found that, in spite of his calculations, a mistake had arisen in the amount of his forces,—that, reckoning himself, there were ten Aberleigh boys on the ground, besides the two foreign allies, proceeding, perhaps, from his over-anxiety to collect recruits; whilst the Sandleford captain, on the contrary, had neglected to secure another mate, as agreed on, and could only muster the original ten of his own parish, himself included.

In this dilemma the umpires immediately proposed to divide the auxiliaries,—a suggestion to which George assented with his usual *sangfroid*, and Charles with his invariable good-humour.

‘You had better toss up for me,’ said the former. ‘For the choice,’ was Horace’s civil amendment; and toss they did. ‘Heads!’ cried he of Sandleford, and heads it was; and, partly caught by the young gentleman’s happy knack of puffing himself, partly by the knowing manner in which he was handling his bat, George was instantly claimed by the winner, and the game began.

Sandleford went in, and it was desired that the stranger and the best of the home party should take the precedence. But our great player coquetted: It might put their side out of spirits if by any accident he were out early in the game; he had seen a match lost by Mr. Budd or Saunders having their wickets knocked down sooner than was expected. He would wait. Accordingly it was not till the first four had gone down with only twenty notches gained that he at last went in, ‘to retrieve,’ as he said, ‘the fortune of the day.’

Nothing could be more imposing than his appearance. There he stood at the wicket, striking his bat against the ground with impatience,—pawing the earth, as it were, like a racehorse at the starting-post, or a greyhound in the slips,—and friends and foes admired and wondered. Even Horace Lucas felt the effect of the fine attitude and the brilliant animation, and delivered his ball less steadily than usual, anticipating that his opponent would get at least three runs. His fears were soon quieted. ‘By some accident’ (to use the young gentleman’s own phrase) Mr. George hit up, and that exceedingly bad field, his cousin Charles, caught him out without a notch.

This misadventure sadly disconcerted Sandleford, as well as the unfortunate champion, and put Aberleigh in high spirits. Horace bowled better than ever; the fielding was excellent; and the whole eleven were out for forty-seven notches,—a wretched innings.

Aberleigh then went in: Horace, and, at Horace’s request, his ally Charles,—George being one of the bowlers. But poor George (to borrow once more his own words) was ‘out of luck, thoroughly out of luck,’ for in spite of all his efforts the two mates got fifty-six before they parted, and the whole score was a hundred and nine.

Eighty-two ahead in the first innings! Small hopes for Sandleford, even though George went in immediately, ‘determined,’ as he said, ‘to conquer fortune.’ Small hopes for Sandleford!

‘Come, Charles,’ said Horace Lucas, ‘let us see whether your bowling may not be as good as your batting. Just give your cousin one ball.’ And at the very first ball the stumps rattled, and the disgraced cricketer slunk away, amidst the crowing of his

antagonists and the reproaches of his mates, so crestfallen that even Horace was touched by his disconsolate countenance and humbled air. His tender-hearted cousin felt a still deeper sympathy, and almost lamented his own success.

'It is all luck, sir,' said he in answer to a compliment from General Lucas, who stood talking to him after the match had been triumphantly won; 'it is all luck! Poor George is a far better player than I am; he was so yesterday, and will be so to-morrow. This is merely the fortune of a day, a trifle not worth a word or a thought!'

'The object is trifling, I grant you, my good young friend,' said the General, 'and luck may have had some share in the victory; but I am much mistaken if your success and your cousin's mortification be not of essential benefit to both. It is one of the most salutary parts of the world's discipline, that modesty should triumph, and that pride should have a fall.'





A COUNTRY CRICKET-MATCH.

N DOUBT if there be any scene in the world more animating or delightful than a cricket-match!—I do not mean a set match at Lord's ground for money, hard money, between a certain number of gentlemen and players, as they are called,—people who make a trade of that noble sport, and degrade it into an affair of bettings, and hedgings, and cheatings, it may be, like boxing or horse-racing; nor do I mean a pretty *fête* in a gentleman's park, where one club of cricketing dandies encounters another such club, and where they show off in graceful costume to a gay marquee of admiring belles, who condescend so to purchase admiration, and while away a long summer morning in partaking cold collations, conversing occasionally, and seeming to understand the game,—the whole being conducted according to ball-room etiquette, so as to be exceedingly elegant and exceedingly dull. No! the cricket that I mean is a real solid old-fashioned match between neighbouring parishes, where each attacks the other for honour and a supper, glory and half-a-crown a man. If there be any gentlemen amongst them, it is well; if not, it is so much the better. Your gentleman cricketer is in general rather an anomalous character. Elderly gentlemen are ob-

viously good for nothing ; and your beaux are, for the most part, hampered and trammelled by dress and habit,—the stiff cravat, the pinched-in waist, the dandy walk. Oh, they will never do for cricket ! Now, our country lads, accustomed to the flail or the hammer (your blacksmiths are capital hitters), have the free use of their arms ; they know how to move their shoulders ; and they can move their feet too—they can run ; then they are so much better made, so much more athletic, and yet so much lissomer,—to use a Hampshire phrase which deserves at least to be good English. Here and there, indeed, one meets with an old Etonian who retains his boyish love for that game which formed so considerable a branch of his education ; some even preserve their boyish proficiency, but in general it wears away like the Greek, quite as certainly, and almost as fast. A few years of Oxford, or Cambridge, or the Continent, are sufficient to annihilate both the power and the inclination. No ! a village match is the thing, where our highest officer, our conductor (to borrow a musical term), is but a little farmer's second son ; where a day labourer is our bowler, and a blacksmith our long-stop ; where the spectators consist of the retired cricketers, the veterans of the green, the careful mothers, the girls, and all the boys of two parishes, together with a few amateurs, little above them in rank, and not at all in pretension ; where laughing and shouting and the very ecstasy of merriment and good humour prevail,—such a match, in short, as I attended yesterday, at the expense of getting twice wet through, and as I would attend to-morrow at the certainty of having that ducking doubled.

For the last three weeks our village has been in a state of great excitement, occasioned by a challenge

from our north-western neighbours, the men of B., to contend with us at cricket. Now we have not been much in the habit of playing matches. Three or four years ago, indeed, we encountered the men of S., our neighbours south-by-east, with a sort of doubtful success, beating them on our own ground, whilst they in the second match returned the compliment on theirs. This discouraged us. Then an unnatural coalition between a High Church curate and an Evangelical gentleman-farmer drove our lads from the Sunday evening practice, which, as it did not begin before both services were concluded, and as it tended to keep the young men from the alehouse, our magistrates had winked at, if not encouraged. The sport, therefore, had languished until the present season, when under another change of circumstances the spirit began to revive. Half-a-dozen fine active lads, of influence amongst their comrades, grew into men and yearned for cricket. An enterprising publican gave a set of ribands; his rival, mine host of the Rose, an out-doer by profession, gave two; and the clergyman and his lay ally, both well-disposed and good-natured men, gratified by the submission to their authority, and finding, perhaps, that no great good resulted from the substitution of public-houses for out-of-door diversions, relaxed. In short, the practice recommenced, and the hill was again alive with men and boys, and innocent merriment; but farther than the riband matches amongst ourselves nobody dreamed of going till this challenge. We were modest, and doubted our own strength. The B. people, on the other hand, must have been braggers born, a whole parish of Gasconaders. Never was such boasting, such crowing, such ostentations display of practice, such mutual compliments from man to man,—bowler

to batter, batter to bowler ! It was a wonder they did not challenge all England. It must be confessed that we were a little astounded ; yet we firmly resolved not to decline the combat, and one of the most spirited of the new growth, William Grey by name, took up the glove in a style of manly courtesy, that would have done honour to a knight in the days of chivalry. 'We were not professed players,' he said, 'being little better than schoolboys, and scarcely older ; but since they had done us the honour to challenge us, we would try our strength. It would be no discredit to be beaten by such a field.'

Having accepted the wager of battle, our champion began forthwith to collect his forces. William Grey is himself one of the finest youths that one shall see, —tall, active, slender, and yet strong, with a piercing eye full of sagacity, and a smile full of good-humour ; a farmer's son by station, and used to hard work, as farmers' sons are now, liked by everybody, and admitted to be an excellent cricketer. He immediately set forth to muster his men, remembering with great complacency that Samuel Long, a bowler *comme il y en a peu*, the very man who had knocked down nine wickets, had beaten us, bowled us out at the fatal return match some years ago at S., had luckily, in a remove of a quarter of a mile last Lady-day, crossed the boundaries of his old parish, and actually belonged to us. Here was a stroke of good fortune ! Our captain applied to him instantly ; and he agreed at a word. Indeed, Samuel Long is a very civilised person. He is a middle-aged man, who looks rather old amongst our young lads, and whose thickness and breadth gave no token of remarkable activity ; but he is very active, and so steady a player—so safe ! We had half gained the match when we had secured him.

He is a man of substance, too, in every way,—owns one cow, two donkeys, six pigs, and geese and ducks beyond count; dresses like a farmer, and owes no man a shilling; and all this from pure industry, sheer day labour. Note that your good cricketer is commonly the most industrious man in the parish; the habits that make him such are precisely those which make a good workman,—steadiness, sobriety, and activity. Samuel Long might pass for the beau ideal of the two characters. Happy were we to possess him! Then we had another piece of good luck. James Brown, a journeyman blacksmith, and a native, who, being of a rambling disposition, had roamed from place to place for half-a-dozen years, had just returned to settle with his brother at another corner of our village, bringing with him a prodigious reputation in cricket and in gallantry,—the gay Lothario of the neighbourhood. He is said to have made more conquests in love and in cricket than any blacksmith in the county. To him also went the indefatigable William Grey, and he also consented to play. No end to our good fortune! Another celebrated batter, called Joseph Hearne, had likewise recently married into the parish. He worked, it is true, at the A. mills, but slept at the house of his wife's father in our territories. He also was sought and found by our leader. But he was grand and shy; made an immense favour of the thing; courted courting, and then hung back. 'Did not know that he could be spared; had partly resolved not to play again—at least not this season; thought it rash to accept the challenge; thought they might do without him'——'Truly I think so too,' said our spirited champion. 'We will not trouble you, Mr. Hearne.'

Having thus secured two powerful auxiliaries, and

rejected a third, we began to reckon and select the regular native forces. Thus ran our list:—William Grey, 1.—Samuel Long, 2.—James Brown, 3.—George and John Simmons, one capital, the other so-so, an uncertain hitter, but a good fieldsman, 5.—Joel Brent, excellent, 6.—Ben Appleton: here was a little pause. Ben's abilities at cricket were not completely ascertained; but then he was so good a fellow, so full of fun and waggery, no doing without Ben; so he figured in the list, 7.—George Harris: a short halt there too. Slowish—slow but sure; I think the proverb brought him in, 8.—Tom Coper: oh, beyond the world, Tom Coper! the red-headed gardening lad, whose left-handed strokes send *her* (a cricket-ball, like that other moving thing, a ship, is always of the feminine gender), sent her spinning a mile, 9.—Harry Willis, another blacksmith, 10.

We had now ten of our eleven, but the choice of the last occasioned some demur. Three young Martins, rich farmers of the neighbourhood, successively presented themselves, and were all rejected by our independent and impartial general for want of merit—*cricketal* merit. 'Not good enough,' was his pithy answer. Then our worthy neighbour, the half-pay lieutenant, offered his services. He, too, though with some hesitation and modesty, was refused: 'Not quite young enough,' was his sentence. John Strong, the exceeding long son of our dwarfish mason, was the next candidate. A nice youth,—everybody likes John Strong,—and a willing, but so tall and so limp, bent in the middle,—a thread-paper, six feet high! We were all afraid that, in spite of his name, his strength would never hold out. 'Wait till next year, John,' quoth William Grey, with all the dignified seniority of twenty speaking to eighteen. 'Coper's a

year younger,' said John. 'Coper's a foot shorter,' replied William. So John retired; and the eleventh man remained unchosen almost to the eleventh hour. The eve of the match arrived, and the post was still vacant, when a little boy of fifteen, David Willis, brother to Harry, admitted by accident to the last practice, saw eight of them out, and was voted in by acclamation.

That previous evening's practice (for Monday was the important day) was a period of great anxiety, and, to say the truth, of great pleasure. There is something strangely delightful in the innocent spirit of party. To be one of a numerous body, to be authorized to say *we*, to have a rightful interest in triumph or defeat, is gratifying at once to social feeling and to personal pride. There was not a ten-year-old urchin, or a septuagenary woman in the parish, who did not feel an additional importance, a reflected consequence, in speaking of 'our side.' An election interests in the same way; but that feeling is less pure. Money is there, and hatred, and politics, and lies. Oh, to be a voter, or a voter's wife, comes nothing near the genuine and hearty sympathy of belonging to a parish, breathing the same air, looking on the same trees, listening to the same nightingales! Talk of a patriotic elector! Give me a parochial patriot, a man who loves his parish! Even we, the female partizans, may partake the common ardour; I am sure I did. I never, though tolerably eager and enthusiastic at all times, remember being in a more delicious state of excitement than on the eve of that battle. Our hopes waxed stronger and stronger. Those of our players who were present were excellent. William Grey got forty notches off his own bat; and that brilliant hitter, Tom Coper, gained eight from

two successive balls. As the evening advanced, too, we had encouragement of another sort. A spy, who had been despatched to reconnoitre the enemy's quarters, returned from their practising ground with a most consolatory report. 'Really,' said Charles Grover, our intelligence,—a fine old steady judge, one who had played well in his day,—'they are no better than so many old women. Any five of ours would beat their eleven.' This sent us to bed in high spirits.

Morning dawned less favourably. The sky promised a series of deluging showers, and kept its word, as English skies are wont to do on such occasions; and a lamentable message arrived at the headquarters from our trusty comrade Joel Brent. His master, a great farmer, had begun the hay-harvest that very morning, and Joel, being as eminent in one field as in another, could not be spared. Imagine Joel's plight!—the most ardent of all our eleven! a knight held back from the tourney! a soldier from the battle! The poor swain was inconsolable. At last, one who is always ready to do a good-natured action, great or little, set forth to back his petition; and by dint of appealing to the public spirit of our worthy neighbour and the state of the barometer, talking alternately of the parish honour and thunder showers, of lost matches and sopped hay, he carried his point, and returned triumphantly with the delighted Joel.

In the meantime we became sensible of another defalcation. On calling over our roll, Brown was missing; and the spy of the preceding night, Charles Grover,—the universal scout and messenger of the village, a man who will run half-a-dozen miles for a pint of beer, who does errands for the very love of the trade, who, if he had been a lord, would have

been an ambassador,—was instantly despatched to summon the truant. His report spread general consternation. Brown had set off at four o'clock in the morning to play in a cricket-match at M., a little town twelve miles off, which had been his last residence. Here was desertion! Here was treachery! Here was treachery against that goodly state, our parish! To send James Brown to Coventry was the immediate resolution; but even that seemed too light a punishment for such delinquency. Then how we cried him down! At the preliminary practice (for the rascal had actually practised with us, and never said a word of his intended disloyalty) he was our faithful mate, and the best player (take him for all in all) of the eleven. At ten in the morning he had run away, and we were well rid of him; he was no batter compared with William Grey or Tom Coper; not fit to wipe the shoes of Samuel Long as a bowler; nothing of a scout to John Simmons; the boy David Willis was worth fifty of him.

‘I trust we have within our realm
Five hundred good as he,’

was the universal sentiment. So we took tall John Strong, who, with an incurable hankering after the honour of being admitted, had kept constantly with the players, to take the chance of some such accident,—we took John for our *pis-aller*. I never saw any one prouder than the good-humoured lad was of this not very flattering piece of preferment.

John Strong was elected, and Brown sent to Coventry; and when I first heard of his delinquency, I thought the punishment only too mild for the crime. But I have since learned the secret history of the offence (if we could know the secret histories of all

offences, how much better the world would seem than it does now!), and really my wrath is much abated. It was a piece of gallantry, of devotion to the sex, or rather a chivalrous obedience to one chosen fair. I must tell my readers the story. Mary Allen, the prettiest girl of M., had, it seems, revenged upon our blacksmith the numberless inconsistencies of which he stood accused. He was in love over head and ears, but the nymph was cruel. She said no, and no, and no, and poor Brown, three times rejected, at last resolved to leave the place, partly in despair, and partly in that hope which often mingles strangely with a lover's despair, the hope that when he was gone he should be missed. He came home to his brother's accordingly; but for five weeks he heard nothing from or of the inexorable Mary, and was glad to beguile his own 'vexing thoughts' by endeavouring to create in his mind an artificial and factitious interest in our cricket-match,—all unimportant as such a trifle must have seemed to a man in love. Poor James, however, is a social and warm-hearted person, not likely to resist a contagious sympathy. As the time for the play advanced, the interest which he had at first affected became genuine and sincere; and he was really, when he left the ground on the previous night, almost as enthusiastically absorbed in the event of the next day as Joel Brent himself. He little foresaw the new and delightful interest which awaited him at home, where, on the moment of his arrival, his sister-in-law and *confidante* presented him with a billet from the lady of his heart. It had, with the usual delay of letters sent by private hands in that rank of life, loitered on the road, in a degree inconceivable to those who are accustomed to the punctual speed of the post, and had taken ten days for its twelve miles'

journey. Have my readers any wish to see this *billet-doux*? I can show them (but in strict confidence) a literal copy. It was addressed,

‘For mistur jem browne
‘blaxmith by
‘S.’

The inside ran thus:—‘Mistur browne this is to Inform yew that oure parish plays bramley men next monday is a week, i think we shall lose without yew. from your humbell servant to command

‘MARY ALLEN.’

Was there ever a prettier relenting? a summons more flattering, more delicate, more irresistible? The precious epistle was undated; but, having ascertained who brought it, and found, by cross-examining the messenger, that the Monday in question was the very next day, we were not surprised to find that *Mistur browne* forgot his engagement to us, forgot all but Mary and Mary’s letter, and set off at four o’clock the next morning to walk twelve miles, and play for her parish, and in her sight. Really we must not send James Brown to Coventry—must we? Though, if, as his sister-in-law tells our damsel Harriet he hopes to do, he should bring the fair Mary home as his bride, he will not greatly care how little we say to him. But he must not be sent to Coventry,—true love forbid!

At last we were all assembled, and marched down to H. common, the appointed ground, which, though in our dominions according to the map, was the constant practising place of our opponents, and *terra incognita* to us. We found our adversaries on the ground, as we expected, for our various delays had

hindered us from taking the field so early as we wished ; and as soon as we had settled all preliminaries, the match began.

But, alas ! I have been so long settling my preliminaries, that I have left myself no room for the detail of our victory, and must squeeze the account of our grand achievements into as little compass as Cowley, when he crammed the names of eleven of his mistresses into the narrow space of four eight-syllable lines. *They* began the warfare,—those boastful men of B. And what think you, gentle reader, was the amount of their innings ? These challengers—the famous eleven—how many did they get ? Think ! imagine ! guess ! You cannot ? Well, they got twenty-two, or rather they got twenty ; for two of theirs were short notches, and would never have been allowed, only that, seeing what they were made of, we and our umpires were not particular. They should have had twenty more, if they had chosen to claim them. Oh, how well we fielded ! and how well we bowled ! Our good play had quite as much to do with their miserable failure as their bad. Samuel Long is a slow bowler, George Simmons a fast one, and the change from Long's lobbing to Simmons's fast balls posed them completely. Poor simpletons ! they were always wrong ; expecting the slow for the quick, and the quick for the slow. Well, we went in. And what were our innings ? Guess again !—guess ! A hundred and sixty-nine ! In spite of soaking showers, and wretched ground, where the ball would not run a yard, we headed them by a hundred and forty-seven ; and then they gave in, as well they might. William Grey pressed them much to try another innings. 'There was so much chance,' as he courteously observed, 'in cricket, that, advan-

tageous as our position seemed, we might very possibly be overtaken. The B. men had better try.' But they were beaten sulky, and would not move, to my great disappointment: I wanted to prolong the pleasure of success. What a glorious sensation it is to be for five hours together—winning—winning! always feeling what a whist-player feels when he takes up four honours, seven trumps! Who would think that a little bit of leather, and two pieces of wood, had such a delightful and delighting power!

The only drawback on my enjoyment was the failure of the pretty boy David Willis, who, injudiciously put in first, and playing for the first time in a match amongst men and strangers, who talked to him and stared at him, was seized with such a fit of shamefaced shyness that he could scarcely hold his bat, and was bowled out without a stroke, from actual nervousness. 'He will come off that,' Tom Coper says. I am afraid he will. I wonder whether Tom had ever any modesty to lose. Our other modest lad, John Strong, did very well; his length told in fielding, and he got good fame. Joel Brent, the rescued mower, got into a scrape, and out of it again,—his fortune for the day. He ran out his mate, Samuel Long, who, I do believe, but for the excess of Joel's eagerness, would have stayed in till this time, by which exploit he got into sad disgrace; and then he himself got thirty-seven runs, which redeemed his reputation. William Grey made a hit which actually lost the cricket-ball. We think she lodged in a hedge, a quarter of a mile off, but nobody could find her. And George Simmons had nearly lost his shoe, which he tossed away in a passion for having been caught out, owing to the ball glancing against it. These, together with a very complete somerset of Ben

Appleton, our long-stop, who floundered about in the mud, making faces and attitudes as laughable as Grimaldi, none could tell whether by accident or design, were the chief incidents of the scene of action. Amongst the spectators nothing remarkable occurred beyond the general calamity of two or three drenchings, except that a form, placed by the side of a hedge, under a very insufficient shelter, was knocked into the ditch in a sudden rush of the cricketers to escape a pelting shower, by which means all parties shared the fate of Ben Appleton, some on land and some by water; and that, amidst the scramble, a saucy gipsy of a girl contrived to steal from the knee of the demure and well-apparelled Samuel Long a smart handkerchief, which his careful dame had tied round it to preserve his new (what is the mincing feminine word?)—his new—inexpressibles, thus reversing the story of Desdemona, and causing the new Othello to call aloud for his handkerchief, to the great diversion of the company. And so we parted; the players retired to their supper, and we to our homes,—all wet through, all good-humoured and happy—except the losers.

To-day we are happy too. Hats, with ribands in them, go glancing up and down; and William Grey says, with a proud humility, 'We do not challenge any parish; but if we be challenged, we are ready.'



A MORNING RAMBLE.

MAY the 3d.—Cold, bright weather. All within doors sunny and chilly; all without, windy and dusty. It is quite tantalizing to see that brilliant sun careering through so beautiful a sky, and to feel little more warmth from his presence than one does from that of his fair but cold sister, the moon. Even the sky, beautiful as it is, has the look of that one sometimes sees in a very bright moonlight night,—deeply, intensely blue, with white clouds driven vigorously along by a strong breeze, now veiling, and now exposing the dazzling luminary around which they sail. A beautiful sky! and, in spite of its coldness, a beautiful world! The effect of this backward spring has been to arrest the early flowers, to which heat is the great enemy; whilst the leaves and the later flowers have nevertheless ventured to peep out slowly and cautiously in sunny places, exhibiting in the copses and hedgerows a pleasant mixture of March and May. And we, poor chilly mortals! must follow, as nearly as we can, the wise example of the May blossoms, by avoiding bleak paths and open commons, and creeping up the sheltered road to the Vicarage,—the pleasant sheltered road, where the western sun steals in between two rows of bright green elms, and the east

wind is fenced off by the range of woody hills which rise abruptly before us, forming so striking a boundary to the picture.

How pretty this lane is, with its tall elms, just dressed in their young leaves, bordering the sunny path, or sweeping in a semicircle behind the clear pools and the white cottages that are scattered along the way! You shall seldom see a cottage hereabout without an accompanying pond, all alive with geese and ducks, at the end of the little garden. Ah! here is Dame Simmons making a most original use of her piece of water, standing on the bank that divides it from her garden, and most ingeniously watering her onion-bed with a new mop,—now a dip, and now a twirl! Really, I give her credit for the invention. It is as good an imitation of a shower as one should wish to see on a summer day. A squirt is nothing to it!

And here is another break to the tall line of elms,—the gate that leads into Farmer Thorpe's great enclosures. Eight, ten, fourteen people in this large field wheat-hoeing. The couple nearest the gate, who keep aloof from all the rest, and are hoeing this furrow so completely in concert, step by step, and stroke for stroke, are Jem Tanner and Mabel Green. There is not a handsomer pair in the field or in the village,—Jem, with his bright complexion, his curling hair, his clear blue eye, and his trim figure, set off to great advantage by his short jacket and trousers and new straw hat; Mabel, with her little stuff gown, and her white handkerchief and apron, defining so exactly her light and flexible shape, and her black eyes flashing from under a deep bonnet lined with pink, whose reflection gives to her bright dark countenance and dimpled cheeks a glow innocently artificial, which was the only charm that they wanted.

Jem and Mabel are, beyond all doubt, the handsomest couple in the field, and I am much mistaken if each have not a vivid sense of the charms of the other. Their mutual admiration was clear enough in their work, but it speaks still more plainly in their idleness. Not a stroke have they done for these five minutes; Jem, propped on his hoe, and leaning across the furrow, whispering soft nonsense; Mabel, blushing and smiling, now making believe to turn away, now listening, and looking up with a sweeter smile than ever, and a blush that makes her bonnet-lining pale. Ah, Mabel! Mabel! Now they are going to work again. No! after three or four strokes the hoes have somehow become entangled, and, without either advancing a step nearer the other, they are playing with these rustic implements as pretty a game at romps—showing off as nice a piece of rural flirtation—as ever was exhibited since wheat was hoed.

Ah, Mabel! Mabel! beware of Farmer Thorpe! He'll see at a glance that little will his corn profit by such labours. Beware, too, Jem Tanner! for Mabel is in some sort an heiress, being the real niece and adopted daughter of our little lame clerk, who, although he looks such a tattered ragamuffin that the very gravediggers are ashamed of him, is well to pass in the world, keeps a scrub pony,—indeed, he can hardly walk up the aisle,—hath a share in the County fire-office, and money in the funds. Mabel will be an heiress, despite the tatterdemalion costume of her honoured uncle, which I think he wears out of coquetry, that the remarks which might otherwise fall on his miserable person—full as misshapen as that of any Hunchback recorded in the Arabian Tales—may find a less offensive vent on his

raiment. Certain such a figure hath seldom been beheld out of church or in. Yet will Mabel, nevertheless, be a fortune; and therefore she must intermarry with another fortune, according to the rule made and provided in such cases; and the little clerk hath already looked her out a spouse, about his own standing,—a widower in the next parish, with four children and a squint. Poor Jem Tanner! Nothing will that smart person or that pleasant speech avail with the little clerk,—never will he officiate at your marriage to his niece,—‘amen’ would ‘stick in his throat.’ Poor things! in what a happy oblivion of the world and its cares—Farmer Thorpe and the wheat-hoeing, the squinting shopkeeper and the little clerk—are they laughing and talking at this moment! Poor things! poor things!

Well, I must pursue my walk. How beautiful a mixture of flowers and leaves is in the high bank under this north hedge, quite an illustration of the blended seasons of which I spoke. An old irregular hedgerow is always beautiful, especially in the spring-time, when the grass, and mosses, and flowering weeds mingle best with the bushes and creeping plants that overhang them. But this bank is most especially various and lovely. Shall we try to analyze it? First, the clinging white-veined ivy, which crawls up the slope in every direction, the masterpiece of that rich mosaic; then the brown leaves and the lilac blossoms of its fragrant namesake, the ground-ivy, which grows here so profusely; then the late-lingering primrose; then the delicate wood-sorrel; then the regular pink stars of the crane’s-bill, with its beautiful leaves; then the golden oxlip and the cowslip, ‘cinque-spotted;’ then the blue pansy, and the enamelled wild hyacinth; then the bright foliage of

the brier-rose, which comes trailing its green wreaths amongst the flowers ; then the bramble and the woodbine, creeping round the foot of a pollard oak with its brown folded leaves ; then a verdant mass,—the black-thorn with its lingering blossoms, the hawthorn with its swelling buds, the bushy maple, the long stems of the hazel, and between them, hanging like a golden plume over the bank, a splendid tuft of the blossomed broom ; then, towering high above all, the tall and leafy elms. And this is but a faint picture of this hedge, on the meadowy side of which sheep are bleating, and where, every here and there, a young lamb is thrusting its pretty head between the trees.

Who is this approaching ? Farmer Thorpe ? Yes, of a certainty, it is that substantial yeoman, sallying forth from his substantial farm-house, which peeps out from between two huge walnut trees on the other side of the road, with intent to survey his labourers in the wheat-field. Farmer Thorpe is a stout, square, sturdy personage, of fifty or thereabout, with a hard weather-beaten countenance, of that peculiar vermilion, all over alike, into which the action of the sun and wind sometimes tans a fair complexion ; sharp, shrewd features, and a keen grey eye. He looks completely like a man who will neither cheat nor be cheated : and such is his character,—an upright, downright English yeoman ; just always, and kind in a rough way ; but given to fits of anger, and filled with an abhorrence of pilfering, and idleness, and trickery of all sorts, that makes him strict as a master and somewhat stern at workhouse and vestry. I doubt if he will greatly relish the mode in which Jem and Mabel are administering the hoe in his wheat-drills. He will not reach the gate yet ; for his usual steady, active pace is turned, by a recent accident, into an unequal,

impatient halt, as if he were alike angry with his lameness and the cause. I must speak to him as he passes, not merely as a due courtesy to a good neighbour, but to give the delinquents in the field notice to resume their hoeing; but not a word of the limp—that is a sore subject.

‘A fine day, Mr. Thorpe.’

‘We want rain, ma’am.’

And on, with great civility, but without pausing a moment, he is gone. He’ll certainly catch Mabel and her lover philandering over his wheat-furrows. Well, that may take its chance!—they have his lameness in their favour, only that the cause of that lameness has made the worthy farmer unusually cross. I think I must confide the story to my readers.

Gipsies and beggars do not in general much inhabit our neighbourhood, but about half a mile off there is a den so convenient for strollers and vagabonds, that it sometimes tempts the rogues to a few days’ sojourn. It is, in truth, nothing more than a deserted brick-kiln by the side of a lonely lane. But there is something so snug and comfortable in the old building (always keeping in view gipsy notions of comfort),—the blackened walls are so backed by the steep hill on whose side they are built, so fenced from the bleak north-east, and letting in so gaily the pleasant western sun, and the wide, rugged, impassable lane (used only as a road to the kiln, and with that abandoned) is at once so solitary and deserted, and so close to the inhabited and populous world,—that it seems made for a tribe whose prime requisites in a habitation are shelter, privacy, and a vicinity to farmyards.

Accordingly, about a month ago, a pretty strong encampment, evidently gipsies, took up their abode in the kiln. The party consisted of two or three tall,

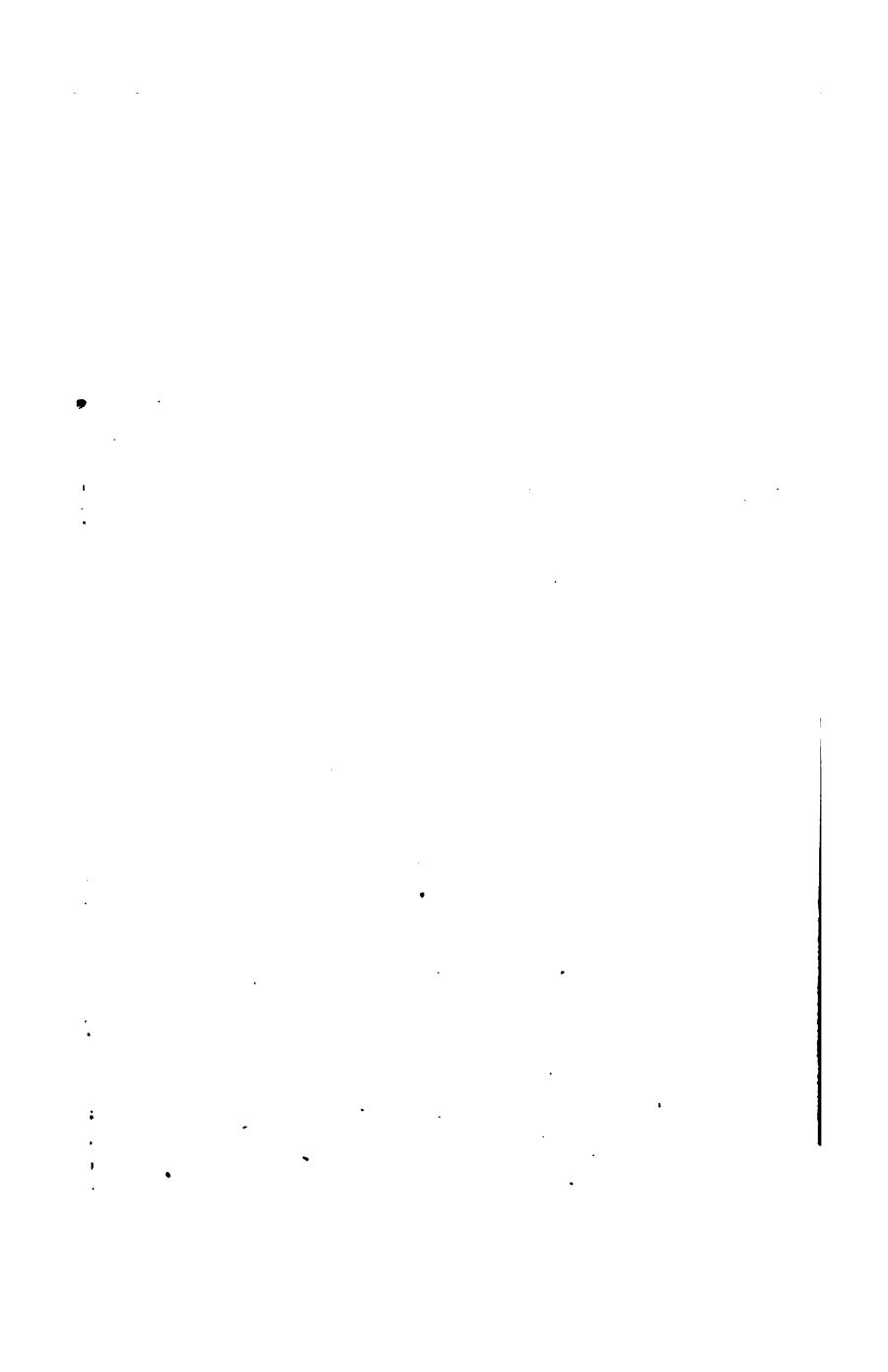
lean, sinister-looking men, who went about the country mending pots and kettles, and driving a small trade in old iron ; one or two children, unnaturally quiet, the spies of the crew ; an old woman, who sold matches and told fortunes ; a young woman with an infant strapped to her back, who begged ; several hungry-looking dogs, and three ragged donkeys. The arrival of these vagabonds spread a general consternation through the village. Gamekeepers and housewives were in equal dismay. Snares were found in the preserves ; poultry vanished from the farmyards ; a lamb was lost from the lea ; and a damask tablecloth, belonging to the worshipful the Mayor of W. , was abstracted from the drying-ground of Rachel Strong, the most celebrated laundress in these parts, to whom it had been sent for the benefit of country washing. No end to the pilfering and the stories of pilfering ! The inhabitants of the kiln were not only thieves in themselves, but the cause of thievery in others. 'The gipsies ' was the answer general to every inquiry for things missing.

Farmer Thorpe, whose dwelling, with its variety of out-buildings,—barns, ricks, and stables,—is only separated by a meadow and a small coppice from the lane that leads to the gipsy retreat, was particularly annoyed by this visitation. Two couple of full-grown ducks, and a whole brood of early chickens, disappeared in one night ; and Mrs. Thorpe fretted over the loss, and the farmer was indignant at the roguery. He set traps, let loose mastiffs, and put in action all the resources of village police,—but in vain. Every night property went ; and the culprits, however strongly suspected, still continued unamenable to the law.

At last, one morning, the great Chanticleer of the farmyard,—a cock of a million, with an unrivalled

crow, a matchless strut, and plumage all gold and green, and orange and purple, gorgeous as a peacock, and fierce as a he-turkey,—Chanticleer, the pride and glory of the yard, was missing, and Mrs. Thorpe's lamentations, and her husband's anger, redoubled. Vowing vengeance against the gipsies, he went to the door to survey a young blood mare of his own breeding; and as he stood at the gate, now bemoaning Chanticleer, now cursing the gipsies, now admiring the bay filly, his neighbour, Dame Simmons,—the identical lady of the mop, who occasionally charred at the house,—came to give him the comfortable information that she had certainly heard Chanticleer—she was quite ready to swear to Chanticleer's voice—crowing in the brick-kiln. No time, she added, should be lost, if Farmer Thorpe wished to rescue that illustrious cock, and to punish the culprits, since the gipsies, when she passed the place, were preparing to decamp.

No time *was* lost. In one moment Farmer Thorpe was on the bay filly's unsaddled back, with the halter for a bridle; and in the next they were on full gallop towards the kiln. But, alas! alas! 'the more haste the worse speed,' says the wisdom of nations. Just as they arrived at the spot from which the procession—gipsies, dogs, and donkeys, and Chanticleer in a sack, shrieking most vigorously—were proceeding on their travels, the young blood mare, whether startled at the unusual *cortège*, or the rough ways or the hideous noise of her old friend the cock, suddenly reared and threw her master, who lay in all the agony of a sprained ankle, unable to rise from the ground; whilst the whole tribe, with poor Chanticleer their prisoner, marched triumphantly past him, utterly regardless of his threats and imprecations. In this plight was the





'The old church with its massy tower.'—

VILLAGE TALES AND SKETCHES, *page 89.*

unlucky farmer discovered, about half an hour afterwards, by his wife, the constable, and a party of his own labourers, who came to give him assistance in securing the culprits; of whom, notwithstanding an instant and active search through the neighbourhood, nothing has yet transpired. We shall hardly see them again in these parts, and have almost done talking of them. The village is returned to its old state of order and honesty; the Mayor of W. has replaced his table-cloth, and Mrs. Thorpe her cock; and the poor farmer's lame ankle is all that remains to give token of the gipsies.

Here we are at the turning which, edging round by the coppice, branches off to their sometime den; the other bend to the right leads up a gentle ascent to the Vicarage, and that is our way. How fine a view of the little parsonage we have from hence, between those arching elms, which enclose it like a picture in a frame! and how pretty a picture it forms, with its three pointed roofs, its snug porch, and its casement windows glittering from amid the China-roses! What a nest of peace and comfort! Farther on, almost at the summit of the hill, stands the old church with its massy tower, a row of superb lime trees running along one side of the churchyard, and a cluster of dark yews shading the other. Few country churches have so much to boast in architectural beauty, or in grandeur of situation.

We lose sight of it as we mount the hill, the lane narrowing and winding between deep banks, surmounted by high hedges, excluding all prospects till we reach the front of the Vicarage, and catch, across the gate of the opposite field, a burst of country the most extensive and the most beautiful,—field and village, mansion and cot, town and river, all smiling

under the sparkling sun of May, and united and harmonized by the profusion of hedgerow timber in its freshest verdure, giving a rich woodland character to the scene, till it is terminated in the distance by the blue line of the Hampshire hills almost melting into the horizon. Such is the view from the Vicarage. But it is too sunny and too windy to stand about out-of-doors, and time to finish our ramble. Down the hill, and round the corner, and past Farmer Thorpe's house, and one glance at the wheat-hoers, and then we will go home.

Ah! it is just as I feared. Jem and Mabel have been parted: they are now at opposite sides of the field,—he looking very angry, working rapidly and violently, and doing more harm than good; she looking tolerably sulky, and just moving her hoe, but evidently doing nothing at all. Farmer Thorpe, on his part, is standing in the middle of the field, observing, but pretending not to observe, the little humours of the separated lovers. There is a lurking smile about the corners of his mouth that bespeaks him more amused than angry. He is a kind person after all, and will certainly make no mischief. I should not even wonder if he espoused Jem Tanner's cause; and, for certain, if any one can prevail on the little clerk to give up his squinting favourite in favour of true love, Farmer Thorpe is the man.





THE FOSTER-MOTHER.

‘**R**AY, how do you like your new school-fellow, Sir Arthur Vere?’ said Mr. Stanley to his young son Charles, as they were sauntering rather than walking in the noble park which surrounds his fine old seat of Stanley Manor, on a bright April morning; ‘his grandmother speaks of him as a lad of high promise.’

‘Of high promise, does she, sir? Whew!’ quoth Master Charles, whistling to a large spaniel, and beating the sedges round a fine piece of water, by the edge of which they stood. ‘A lad of promise! Whew! Heigh, Dash! heigh! One may be sure there are teal or wild-ducks here by Dash’s action. Heigh, Dash! heigh!’ continued Master Stanley. ‘And so his grandmamma speaks of Vere as a lad of promise? Whew, Dash! There’s a fine fellow!’

Now Master Charles Stanley was a boy still under eleven; but, being clever, bold, and spirited, an old denizen of a public school, and encouraged to talk freely at home, he spoke with a decision and freedom not very usual at his age, thus exhibiting to his excellent father, and by exhibiting enabling him to correct, the rash judgments of inexperience, and the petulant decisions of a presumptuous though generous character. In the present instance, Mr. Stanley was a good

deal amused by the manner in which his son had contrived to intimate his dissent from the opinion of the good old Lady Vere; and when Charles repeated, 'A lad of high promise, indeed! Whew, Dash! whew!' he replied at once to his insinuation, 'And why not a boy of promise, Charles?'

'Because, sir, he's so much more like a girl. You never saw such a mincing, blushing, delicate personage as he is in all your life; afraid of getting wet in the feet lest he should catch cold, or of going without his hat lest he should spoil his complexion. He wraps half-a-dozen silk handkerchiefs about his neck because he is subject to sore throats; wears kid gloves at cricket for fear his hands should chap; and wraps up his feet in woollen socks because he once had a chilblain. A promising boy, indeed! Why, sir, his grandmother herself could not be a greater coddle in her own venerable person than this precious sprig of the baronetage, Sir Arthur Vere.'

Mr. Stanley smiled in spite of himself. 'You'll come to kid gloves some time or other, Master Charles; for as rough and red as those paws of yours are now, one may trust to the instinct of eighteen for that foppery. But eleven *is* rather early.'

'Besides, sir,' continued Charles, 'he sports a dressing-box as large as my trunk, full of almond paste, and violet soap, and *eau-de-Cologne*, and oil for the hair, and all manner of essences, so that one may smell him half a mile off; and his cambric handkerchief was tossed out of the school only last week by Dr. K., because it half poisoned him by stinking of otto of roses. I hope I shall never come to that, sir, even if I do turn out a coxcomb at eighteen.'

'There is no telling, Charles,' replied his father. 'I think you a very promising subject for any folly

that may happen at that time to be the fashion. But this poor boy! What a life he must lead amongst you! And how entirely he owes his effeminacy to the accident of his being brought up amongst females!’

‘I think not, sir; it is the nature of the creature. If you were to see him you would say so. All the grandmothers in the world would never make a manly lad such a milk-sop.’ And Charles looked at himself as he stood struttingly flourishing a switch in one hand, and caressing Dash—who, dripping with mud from the bank, was splashing him most manfully from top to toe—with the other; he looked as if he would fain have said, ‘All the grandmothers in the world would never have made a milk-sop of me.’

Apparently Mr. Stanley read his son’s thoughts. ‘Ah, Charles! you know little of the effect of education, of habit, of constant association. You yourself, if exposed to similar circumstances, would have been just as likely to turn out a missy young gentleman as this poor child, Sir Arthur Vere; his very title will make against him. But, talking of the power of association, come and sit down on this bank, and let Dash return to his dear sport of beating for wild-fowl, and be quiet, if you can, for five minutes, whilst I tell you a story.’

Now Master Charles did not very thoroughly relish this invitation. It seemed to him hardly manly to sit down for the purpose of listening to a story which, he suspected, was to be told to him for the sake of the moral; he obeyed, nevertheless, flumping himself down in the midst of a tuft of cowslips, whilst Dash, with equal comprehension and far more alacrity, returned to his search for the wild-duck’s nest, the existence of which had become clear to his sagacity amongst the sedges and shallows on the water’s edge.

‘Nay, it is not much of a story either,’ said Mr. Stanley, when both were comfortably established on their soft and fragrant seat; ‘not much that deserves the name of a story, though a curious fact in natural history. Do you remember admiring Dr. Lyndsay’s pretty little spaniel yesterday, and wondering at his name?’

‘Romulus? Yes, sir; I do not know which I admired most, the venerable master, with his fine upright person and keen bright eye, his white bushy wig and three-cornered hat and clerical coat, walking so alertly and speaking so kindly, and yet with something stately about him too, or the pretty little delicate creature, so white and shining, that followed him,—rather too much like a lady’s pet, to be sure; but the little dog and the master matched each other well; both seemed courtly and dignified, a sort of people whose company did one honour.’

‘The master’s company would do honour to any court in Europe, Charles. You are right there. He is one of the most learned and eminent persons in England, and as remarkable for his high qualities as for his vast attainments. But it is with Romulus that we have to do at present. Romulus’s mother belonged to your kind friend Colonel Bruce, the gay, gallant, handsome sportsman, whose manliness and gentlemanliness you admire so much. She was a beautiful little spaniel, of the Marlborough breed, excellent as a sporting dog, and a great pet with her master. She had just been confined with Romulus and another pup, and was very literally in the straw; when one fine morning in September Colonel Bruce sallied forth with his gun and his pointers partridge shooting, little suspecting that his poor pet, whose attention had unluckily been caught by the gun and

the leathern gaiters, had left her puppies to follow him to the field. The pointers were ranging the stubble, when Colonel Bruce heard a rustling in the hedgerow close by; he saw nothing, but, taking for granted that it was a hare, fired, and killed his little favourite dead upon the spot.'

'Oh, papa! Poor Colonel Bruce! What a sad accident! How shocked he must have been!'

'Shocked enough, Charles. Even now he says he can scarcely bear to think of it. The poor little creature, when he discovered her amongst the long grass and reeds, uttered one faint moan, looked up in his face fondly and piteously, tried to lick his hand, then gave one shiver, stretched out her delicate feet, and died. She, however, was dead. But the puppies! What was to become of them? Only three days old, and smaller than rats!'

'What did become of them, father?'

'Why, luckily, Mrs. Bruce had a favourite cat, whose kittens had just been taken from her. The pups were put to pussy, who took to them as if they had been her own offspring, and brought them up with all imaginable care and success.'

'Well, sir, now I find the reason of the name. Well?'

'Romulus you have seen. He is rather smaller, perhaps, than he might have been if nursed by his own mother, but that, in a Marlborough spaniel, is a merit; and Remus (for so, of course, the brother twin was called) is smaller still. Their foster-mother did them all possible justice; and was fonder of them, and nourished them longer, than she had ever been known to do by her own kittens. But the extraordinary part of the story is, that with the cat's milk these little doglings imbibed also the cat's habits;

would sit and wash their faces with their paws, were excellent mousers, and would watch a rat-hole for an hour.'

'Oh, papa!'

'Fact, I assure you, Charles. The celebrated cat who was turned into a lady at the prayer of her master never caught a mouse in better style than Romulus, who, moreover, would no more wet his feet than his purring foster-mother, or Sir Arthur Vere.'

'Oh, father!'

'It's the simple truth, I assure you, Charles ; and proceeds, in both instances, from the same cause, example and education ; and the self-same story, which throws some light on the origin of that poor boy's effeminacy, may also afford good hope of his reformation ; for whilst Romulus, under the tender care of Dr. Lyndsay, which (no offence to him) may in this instance be compared to the tutelage of Lady Vere, continues to pursue and practise all his cattish propensities and habits, Remus, turned into Colonel Bruce's kennel, which (no offence to that repository of doggish learning) may be not unaptly likened to the riotous seminary yclept a public school, has recovered all his canine hardihood and accomplishments, is famous in covert and hedgerow, as good a water dog as Dash himself, and as little likely to notice a mouse, or wash his face with his paws, as that sagacious quadruped. And now, Charles, may we not have hopes of Sir Arthur?'

And Charles assented ; and so it proved. Before two years had elapsed, young Vere, stimulated by ridicule, had flung aside his kid gloves, his woollen socks, his perfumery, and his foppery, had overcome his horror of wet feet and chapped hands, and had

become the best rower and the second best cricketer of his form.

N.B.—The canine part of my little story is literally true. Romulus is still living, and the property of no less a person than the venerable P—— of M—— College, the learned and excellent Dr. R——.





WHITSUN-EVE.

THE pride of my heart and the delight of my eyes is my garden. Our house, which is in dimensions very much like a bird-cage, and might, with almost equal convenience, be laid on a shelf or hung up in a tree, would be utterly unbearable in wet weather were it not that we have a retreat out-of-doors, and a very pleasant retreat it is. To make my readers comprehend it, I must describe our whole territories.

Fancy a small plot of ground, with a pretty, low, irregular cottage at one end ; a large granary, divided from the dwelling by a little court running along one side, and a long thatched shed, open towards the garden, and supported by wooden pillars, on the other. The bottom is bounded half by an old wall, and half by an old paling, over which we see a pretty distance of woody hills. The house, granary, wall, and paling are covered with vines, cherry trees, roses, honeysuckles, and jessamines, with great clusters of tall hollyhocks running up between them ; a large elder overhanging the little gate, and a magnificent bay tree, such a tree as shall scarcely be matched in these parts, breaking with its beautiful conical form the horizontal lines of the buildings. This is my garden ; and the long pillared shed, the sort of rustic

arcade, which runs along one side, parted from the flower-beds by a row of rich geraniums, is our out-of-door drawing-room.

I know nothing so pleasant as to sit there on a summer afternoon, with the western sun flickering through the great elder tree, and lighting up our gay parterres, where flowers and flowering shrubs are set as thick as grass in a field, a wilderness of blossom, interwoven, intertwined, wreathy, garlandy, profuse beyond all profusion, where we may guess that there is such a thing as mould, but never see it. I know nothing so pleasant as to sit in the shade of that dark bower, with the eye resting on that bright piece of colour, lighted so gloriously by the evening sun; now catching a glimpse of the little birds as they fly rapidly in and out of their nests,—for there are always two or three birds' nests in the thick tapestry of cherry trees, honeysuckles, and China-roses which covers our walls; now tracing the gay gambols of the common butterflies as they sport around the dahlias; now watching that rarer moth, which the country people, fertile in pretty names, call the bee-bird,—that bird-like insect, which flutters in the hottest days over the sweetest flowers, inserting its long proboscis into the small tube of the jessamine, and hovering over the scarlet blossoms of the geranium, whose bright colour seems reflected on its own feathery breast,—that insect which seems so thoroughly a creature of the air, never at rest, always, even when feeding, self-poised and self-supported, and whose wings, in their ceaseless motion, have a sound so deep, so full, so lulling, so musical. Nothing so pleasant as to sit amid that mixture of the flower and the leaf watching the bee-bird! Nothing so pretty to look at as my garden! It is quite a picture; only, unluckily, it resembles a

picture in more qualities than one,—it is fit for nothing but to look at. One might as well think of walking in a bit of framed canvas. There are walks, to be sure,—tiny paths of smooth gravel, by courtesy called such,—but they are so overhung by roses and lilies, and such gay encroachers—so overrun by convolvulus, and heart's-ease, and mignonette, and other sweet stragglers—that, except to edge through them occasionally for the purposes of planting, or weeding, or watering, there might as well be no paths at all. Nobody thinks of walking in my garden. Even May glides along with a delicate and trackless step, like a swan through the water; and we, its two-footed denizens, are fain to treat it as if it were really a saloon, and go out for a walk towards sunset, just as if we had not been sitting in the open air all day.

What a contrast from the quiet garden to the lively street! Saturday night is always a time of stir and bustle in our village, and this is Whitsun-eve, the pleasantest Saturday of all the year, when London journeymen and servant lads and lasses snatch a short holiday to visit their families. A short and precious holiday, the happiest and liveliest of any; for even the gambols and merry-makings of Christmas offer but a poor enjoyment, compared with the rural diversions, the Mayings, revels, and cricket-matches of Whitsuntide.

We ourselves are to have a cricket-match on Monday, not played by the men,—who, since a certain misadventure with the Beech-hillers, are, I am sorry to say, rather chopfallen,—but by the boys, who, zealous for the honour of their parish, and headed by their bold leader Ben Kirby, marched in a body to our antagonists' ground some time after our

melancholy defeat, challenged the boys of that proud hamlet, and beat them out and out on the spot. Never was a more signal victory. Our boys enjoyed this triumph with so little moderation, that it had liked to have produced a very tragical catastrophe. The captain of the Beech-hill youngsters, a capital bowler, by name Amos Stone, enraged past all bearing by the crowing of his adversaries, flung the ball at Ben Kirby with so true an aim, that if that sagacious leader had not warily ducked his head when he saw it coming, there would probably have been a coroner's inquest on the case, and Amos Stone would have been tried for manslaughter. He let fly with such vengeance, that the cricket-ball was found embedded in a bank of clay five hundred yards off, as if it had been a cannon shot. Tom Coper and Farmer Thackum, the umpires, both say they never saw so tremendous a ball. If Amos Stone live to be a man (I mean to say, if he be not hanged first), he'll be a pretty player. He is coming here on Monday with his party to play the return match, the umpires having respectively engaged Farmer Thackum that Amos shall keep the peace, Tom Coper that Ben shall give no unnecessary or wanton provocation,—a nicely worded and lawyer-like clause, and one that proves that Tom Coper hath his doubts of the young gentleman's discretion ; and, of a truth, so have I. I would not be Ben Kirby's surety, cautiously as the security is worded,—no ! not for a white double dahlia, the present object of my ambition.

This village of ours is swarming to-night like a hive of bees, and all the church bells round are pouring out their merriest peals, as if to call them together. I must try to give some notion of the various figures.

First, there is a group suited to Teniers, a cluster

of out-of-door customers of the Rose, old benchers of the inn, who sit round a table smoking and drinking in high solemnity to the sound of Timothy's fiddle. Next, a mass of eager boys, the combatants of Monday, who are surrounding the shoemaker's shop, where an invisible hole in their ball is mending by Master Keep himself, under the joint superintendence of Ben Kirby and Tom Coper, Ben showing much verbal respect and outward deference for his umpire's judgment and experience, but managing to get the ball done his own way after all ; whilst outside the shop the rest of the eleven, the less trusted commons, are shouting and bawling round Joel Brent, who is twisting the waxed twine round the handles of the bats—the poor bats, which please nobody, which the taller youths are despising as too little and too light, and the smaller are abusing as too heavy and too large. Happy critics ! winning their match can hardly be a greater delight,—even if to win it they be doomed ! Farther down the street is the pretty black-eyed girl Sally Wheeler, come home for a day's holiday from B., escorted by a tall footman in a dashing livery, whom she is trying to curtsy off before her deaf grandmother sees him. I wonder whether she will succeed !

Ascending the hill are two couples of a different description. Daniel Tubb and his fair Valentine, walking boldly along like licensed lovers,—they have been asked twice in church, and are to be married on Tuesday ; and closely following that happy pair, near each other, but not together, come Jem Tanner and Mabel Green, the poor culprits of the wheat-hoeing. Ah ! the little clerk hath not relented ! The course of true love doth not yet run smooth in that quarter. Jem dodges along, whistling ' Cherry-ripe,' pretending

to walk by himself, and to be thinking of nobody ; but every now and then he pauses in his negligent saunter, and turns round outright to steal a glance at Mabel, who on her part is making believe to walk with poor Olive Hathaway, the lame mantua-maker, and even affecting to talk and to listen to that gentle, humble creature, as she points to the wild-flowers on the common, and the lambs and children disporting amongst the gorse, but whose thoughts and eyes are evidently fixed on Jem Tanner, as she meets his backward glance with a blushing smile, and half springs forward to meet him ; whilst Olive has broken off the conversation as soon as she perceived the pre-occupation of her companion, and begun humming, perhaps unconsciously, two or three lines of Burns, whose ' Whistle and I'll come to thee, my love,' and ' Gi'e me a glance of thy bonny black e'e,' were never better exemplified than in the couple before her. Really it is curious to watch them, and to see how gradually the attraction of this tantalizing vicinity becomes irresistible, and the rustic lover rushes to his pretty mistress like the needle to the magnet. On they go, trusting to the deepening twilight, to the little clerk's absence, to the good humour of the happy lads and lasses, who are passing and repassing on all sides,—or rather, perhaps, in a happy oblivion of the cross uncle, the kind villagers, the squinting lover, and the whole world. On they trip, arm in arm, he trying to catch a glimpse of her glowing face under her bonnet, and she hanging down her head, and avoiding his gaze with a mixture of modesty and coquetry, which well becomes the rural beauty. On they go, with a reality and intensity of affection which must overcome all obstacles ; and poor Olive follows her with an evident sympathy in their happiness,

which makes her almost as enviable as they ; and we pursue our walk amidst the moonshine and the nightingales, with Jacob Frost's cart looming in the distance, and the merry sounds of Whitsuntide, the shout, the laugh, and the song, echoing all around us like 'noises of the air.'





OUR MAYING.

AS party produces party, and festival brings forth festival in higher life, so one scene of rural festivity is pretty sure to be followed by another. The boys' cricket-match at Whitsuntide, which was won most triumphantly by our parish, and luckily passed off without giving cause for a coroner's inquest, or indeed without injury of any sort, except the demolition of Amos Stone's new straw hat, the crown of which (Amos' head being fortunately at a distance) was fairly struck out by the cricket-ball; this match produced one between our eleven and the players of the neighbouring hamlet of Whitley; and, being patronized by the young lord of the manor and several of the gentry round, and followed by jumping in sacks, riding donkey-races, grinning through horse-collars, and other diversions more renowned for their antiquity than their elegance, gave such general satisfaction, that it was resolved to hold a Maying in full form in Whitley wood.

Now this wood of ours happens to be a common of twenty acres, with three trees on it, and the Maying was fixed to be held between hay-time and harvest; but 'what's in a name?' Whitley wood is a beautiful piece of greensward, surrounded on three sides by fields, and farmhouses, and cottages, and woody

uplands, and on the other by a fine park ; and the May-house was erected and the May-games held in the beginning of July, the very season of leaves and roses, when the days are at the longest, and the weather at the finest, and the whole world is longing to get out-of-doors. Moreover, the whole festival was aided, not impeded, by the gentlemen amateurs, headed by that very genial person, our young lord of the manor ; whilst the business part of the affair was confided to the well-known diligence, zeal, activity, and intelligence of that most popular of village landlords, mine host of the Rose. How could a Maying fail under such auspices ? Everybody expected more sunshine and more fun, more flowers and more laughing, than ever was known at a rustic merry-making ; and really, considering the manner in which expectation had been raised, the quantity of disappointment has been astonishingly small.

Landlord Sims, the master of the revels, and our very good neighbour, is a portly, bustling man, of five-and-forty or thereabout, with a hale, jovial visage, a merry eye, a pleasant smile, and a general air of good-fellowship. This last qualification, whilst it serves greatly to recommend his ale, is apt to mislead superficial observers, who generally account him a sort of a slenderer Boniface, and imagine that, like that renowned hero of the spiggot, Master Sims eats, drinks, and sleeps on his own anno domini. They were never more mistaken in their lives : no soberer man than Master Sims within twenty miles ! Except for the good of the house, he no more thinks of drinking beer than a grocer of eating figs. To be sure, when the jug lags he will take a hearty pull, just by way of example, and to set the good ale agoing. But in general he trusts to subtler and more delicate modes

of quickening its circulation. A good song, a good story, a merry jest, a hearty laugh, and a most winning habit of assentation,—these are his implements. There is not a better companion or a more judicious listener in the county. His pliability is astonishing. He shall say yes to twenty different opinions on the same subject within the hour ; and so honest and cordial does his agreement seem, that no one of his customers, whether drunk or sober, ever dreams of doubting his sincerity. The hottest conflict of politics never puzzles him : Whig or Tory, he is both, or either,—‘ the happy Mercutio, that curses both houses.’ Add to this gift of conformity, a cheerful, easy temper, an alacrity of attention, a zealous desire to please, which gives to his duties as a landlord all the grace of hospitality, and a perpetual civility and kindness, even when he has nothing to gain by them,—and no one can wonder at Master Sims’s popularity.

After his good wife’s death, this popularity began to extend itself in a remarkable manner amongst the females of the neighbourhood ; smitten with his portly person, his smooth, oily manner, and a certain soft, earnest, whispering voice, which he generally assumes when addressing one of the fairer sex, and which seems to make his very ‘ how-d’ye-do ’ confidential and complimentary. Moreover, it was thought that the good landlord was well to do in the world, and though Betsy and Letty were good little girls, quick, civil, and active, yet, poor things, what could such young girls know of a house like the Rose ? All would go to rack and ruin without the eye of a mistress ! Master Sims must look out for a wife. So thought the whole female world, and apparently Master Sims began to think so himself.

The first fair one to whom his attention was directed

was a rosy, pretty widow, a pastry-cook of the next town, who arrived in our village on a visit to her cousin the baker, for the purpose of giving confectionery lessons to his wife. Nothing was ever so hot as that courtship. During the week that the lady of pie-crust stayed, her lover almost lived in the oven. One would have thought that he was learning to make the cream tarts without pepper, by which Bedreddin Hassan regained his state and his princess. It would be a most suitable match, as all the parish agreed,—the widow, for as pretty as she was (and one shan't often see a pleasanter open countenance, or a sweeter smile), being within ten years as old as her suitor, and having had two husbands already. A most proper and suitable match, said everybody; and when our landlord carried her back to B. in his new-painted green cart, all the village agreed that they were gone to be married, and the ringers were just setting up a peal, when Master Sims returned alone, single, crest-fallen, dejected; the bells stopped of themselves, and we heard no more of the pretty pastry-cook. For three months after that rebuff, mine host, albeit not addicted to aversions, testified an equal dislike to women and tartlets, widows and plumcake. Even poor Alice Taylor, whose travelling basket of lollypops and gingerbread he had whilom patronised, was forbidden the house; and not a bun or a biscuit could be had at the Rose, for love or money.

The fit, however, wore off in time; and he began again to follow the advice of his neighbours, and to look out for a wife, up street and down; whilst at each extremity a fair object presented herself, from neither of whom had he the slightest reason to dread a repetition of the repulse which he had experienced from the blooming widow. The down-street lady was a widow

also, the portly, comely relict of our drunken village blacksmith, who, in spite of her joy at her first husband's death, and an old spite at mine host of the Rose, to whose good ale and good company she was wont to ascribe most of the aberrations of the deceased, began to find her shop, her journeymen, and her eight children (six unruly, obstreperous Pickles of boys, and two tom-boys of girls), rather more than a lone woman could manage, and to sigh for a helpmate to ease her of her cares, collect the boys at night, see the girls to school of a morning, break the larger imps of running away to revels and fairs, and the smaller fry of bird-nesting and orchard-robbing, and bear a part in the lectures and chastisements which she deemed necessary to preserve the young rebels from the bad end which she predicted to them twenty times a day. Master Sims was the coadjutor on whom she had inwardly pitched, and accordingly she threw out broad hints to that effect every time she encountered him, which, in the course of her search for boys and girls, who were sure to be missing at school-time and bed-time, happened pretty often ; and Mr. Sims was far too gallant and too much in the habit of assenting to listen unmoved ; for really the widow was a fine, tall, comely woman ; and the whispers, and smiles, and hand-pressings, when they happened to meet, were becoming very tender ; and his admonitions and head-shakings addressed to the young crew (who, nevertheless, all liked him) quite fatherly. This was his down-street flame.

The rival lady was Miss Lydia Day, the carpenter's sister ; a slim, upright maiden, not remarkable for beauty, and not so young as she had been, who, on inheriting a small annuity from the mistress with whom she had spent the best of her days, retired to her

native village to live on her means. A genteel, demure, quiet personage was Miss Lydia Day ; much addicted to snuff and green tea, and not averse from a little gentle scandal ; for the rest, a good sort of woman, and *un très-bon parti* for Master Sims, who seemed to consider it a profitable speculation, and made love to her whenever she happened to come into his head, which, it must be confessed, was hardly so often as her merits and her annuity deserved. Remiss as he was, he had no lack of encouragement to complain of ; for she 'to hear would seriously incline,' and put on her best silk, and her best simper, and lighted up her faded complexion into something approaching to a blush, whenever he came to visit her. And this was Master Sims's up-street love.

So stood affairs at the Rose when the day of the Maying arrived ; and the double flirtation, which, however dexterously managed, must have been sometimes, one would think, rather inconvenient to the innamorato, proved on this occasion extremely useful. Each of the fair ladies contributed her aid to the festival,—Miss Lydia by tying up sentimental garlands for the May-house, and scolding the carpenters into diligence in the erection of the booths ; the widow by giving her whole bevy of boys and girls a holiday, and turning them loose on the neighbourhood to collect flowers as they could. Very useful auxiliaries were these light foragers ; they scoured the country far and near,—irresistible mendicants ! pardonable thieves ! coming to no harm, poor children, except that little George got a black eye in tumbling from the top of an acacia tree at the Park, and that Sam (he's a sad Pickle is Sam !) narrowly escaped a horse-whipping from the head-gardener at the Hall, who detected a bunch of his new rhododendron, the only

plant in the county, forming the very crown and centre of the May-pole. Little harm did they do, poor children, with all their pilfery; and when they returned, covered with their flowery loads, like the May-day figure called 'Jack of the Green,' they worked at the garlands and the May-houses as none but children ever do work, putting all their young life and their untiring spirit of noise and motion into their pleasant labour. Oh, the din of that building! Talk of the Tower of Babel! that was a quiet piece of masonry compared to the May-house of Whitley wood, with its walls of leaves and flowers, and its canvas booths at either end for refreshments and musicians. Never was known more joyous note of preparation.

The morning rose more quietly,—I had almost said more dully,—and promised ill for the *ſite*. The sky was gloomy, the wind cold, and the green filled as slowly as a balloon seems to do when one is watching it. The entertainments of the day were to begin with a cricket-match (two elevens to be chosen on the ground), and the wickets pitched at twelve o'clock precisely. Twelve o'clock came, but no cricketers, except, indeed, some two or three punctual and impatient gentlemen; one o'clock came, and brought no other reinforcement than two or three more of our young Etonians and Wykhamites,—less punctual than their precursors, but not a whit less impatient. Very provoking, certainly, but not very uncommon. Your country cricketer, the peasant, the mere rustic, does love on these occasions to keep his betters waiting, if only to display his power; and when we consider that it is the one solitary opportunity in which importance can be felt and vanity gratified, we must acknowledge it to be perfectly in human nature that a few airs should be shown. Accordingly our best

players held aloof. Tom Coper would not come to the ground ; Joel Brent came, indeed, but would not play ; Samuel Long coquetted !—he would and he would not. Very provoking, certainly ! Then two young farmers, a tall brother and a short, Hampshire men, cricketers born, whose good-humour and love of the game rendered them sure cards, had been compelled to go on business—the one ten miles south, the other fifteen north—that very morning. No playing without the Goddards ! No sign of either of them on the B. road or the F. Most intolerably provoking, beyond a doubt. Master Sims tried his best coaxing and his best double X on the recusant players, but all in vain. In short, there was great danger of the match going off altogether, when, about two o'clock, Amos Stone, who was there with the crown of his straw hat sewed in wrong side outward, new thatched, as it were, and who had been set to watch the B. highway, gave notice that something was coming as tall as the Maypole, which something turning out to be the long Goddard, and his brother approaching at the same moment in the opposite direction, hope, gaiety, and good-humour revived again ; and two elevens, including Amos and another urchin of his calibre, were formed on the spot.

I never saw a prettier match. The gentlemen, the Goddards, and the boys being equally divided, the strength and luck of the parties were so well balanced, that it produced quite a neck-and-neck race, won only by two notches. Amos was completely the hero of the day, standing out half of his side, and getting five notches at one hit. His side lost, but so many of his opponents gave him their ribands, (have not I said that Master Sims bestowed a set of ribands ?) that the straw hat was quite covered with purple trophies ;

and Amos, stalking about the ground, with a shy and awkward vanity, looked with his decorations like the sole conqueror—the Alexander or Napoleon of the day. The boy did not speak a word; but every now and then he displayed a set of huge white teeth in a grin of inexpressible delight. By far the happiest and proudest personage of that Maying was Amos Stone.

By the time the cricket-match was over, the world began to be gay at Whitley wood. Carts and gigs, and horses and carriages, and people of all sorts, arrived from all quarters; and, lastly, ‘the blessed sun himself’ made his appearance, adding a triple lustre to the scene. Fiddlers, ballad-singers, cake baskets—Punch—Master Frost, crying cherries—a Frenchman with dancing dogs—a Bavarian woman selling brooms—half-a-dozen stalls with fruit and frippery—and twenty noisy games of quoits, and bowls, and ninepins—boys throwing at boxes—girls playing at ball—gave to the assemblage the bustle, clatter, and gaiety of a Dutch fair, as one sees it in Teniers’ pictures. Plenty of drinking and smoking on the green—plenty of eating in the booths—the gentlemen cricketers, at one end, dining off a round of beef which made the table totter—the players, at the other, supping off a gammon of bacon—Amos Stone crammed at both—and Landlord Sims bustling everywhere with an activity that seemed to confer upon him the gift of ubiquity, assisted by the little light-footed maidens, his daughters, all smiles and curtsies, and by a pretty black-eyed young woman, name unknown, with whom, even in the midst of his hurry, he found time, as it seemed to me, for a little philandering. What would the widow and Miss Lydia have said? But they remained in happy

ignorance,—the one drinking tea in most decorous primness in a distant marquee, disliking to mingle with so mixed an assembly; the other in full chase after the most unlucky of all her urchins, the boy called Sam, who had gotten into a *démêlé* with a showman, in consequence of mimicking the wooden gentleman Punch and his wife Judy,—thus, as the showman observed, bringing his exhibition into disrepute.

Meanwhile the band struck up in the May-house, and the dance, after a little demur, was fairly set afloat,—an honest English country dance (there had been some danger of waltzing and quadrilling), with ladies and gentlemen at the top, and country lads and lasses at the bottom,—a happy mixture of cordial kindness on the one hand, and pleased respect on the other. It was droll, though, to see the beplumed and beflowered French hats, the silks and the furbelows, sailing and rustling amidst the straw bonnets and cotton gowns of the humbler dancers; and not less so to catch a glimpse of the little lame clerk, shabbier than ever, peeping through the canvas opening of the booth, with a grin of ineffable delight, over the shoulders of our Vicar's pretty wife. Really, considering that Mabel Green and Jem Tanner were standing together at that moment at the top of the set, so deeply engaged in making love that they forgot when they ought to begin, and that the little clerk must have seen them, I cannot help taking his grin as a favourable omen to those faithful lovers.

Well, the dance finished, the sun went down, and we departed. The Maying is over, the booths carried away, and the May-house demolished. Everything has fallen into its old position, except the love affairs of Landlord Sims. The pretty lass with the black

eyes, who first made her appearance at Whitley wood, is actually staying at the Rose Inn on a visit to his daughters ; and the village talk goes that she is to be the mistress of that thriving hostelry, and the wife of its master ; and both her rivals are jealous after their several fashions,—the widow in her tantrums, the maiden in the dumps. Nobody knows exactly who the black-eyed damsel may be ; but she's young, and pretty, and civil, and modest ; and, without intending to depreciate the merits of either of her competitors, I cannot help thinking that our neighbour has shown his good taste.





THE LOST KEYS;

OR, A DAY OF DISTRESS.

IT was a glorious June morning, and I got up gay and bright, as the Americans say, to breakfast in the pretty summer-room overlooking the garden, which, built partly for my accommodation, and partly for that of my geraniums, who make it their winter residence, is as regularly called the greenhouse as if I and my several properties — sofas, chairs, tables, chiffoniers, and ottomans—did not inhabit it during the whole of the fine season; as if it were not in its own person a well-proportioned and spacious apartment, no other-ways to be distinguished from common drawing-rooms than by being nearly fronted with glass, about which out-of-door myrtles, passion-flowers, clematis, and the Persian honeysuckle form a most graceful and varied framework, not unlike the festoons of flowers and foliage which one sees round some of the scarce and high-priced tradesmen's cards, and ridotto tickets of Hogarth and Bartolozzi. Large glass folding-doors open into the little garden, almost surrounded by old buildings of the most picturesque form,—the buildings themselves partly hidden by clustering vines and my superb bay tree, its shining leaves glittering in the sun on one side, whilst a tall pear tree, garlanded to the very top with an English honeysuckle in full flower,

breaks the horizontal line of the low cottage roof on the other,—the very pear tree being, in its own turn, half concealed by a splendid pyramid of geraniums erected under its shade. Such geraniums! It does not become us poor mortals to be vain, but really my geraniums! There is certainly nothing but the garden into which Aladdin found his way, and where the fruit was composed of gems, that can compare with them. This pyramid is undoubtedly the great object from the greenhouse; but the common flower-beds which surround it, filled with roses of all sorts, and lilies of all colours, and pinks of all patterns, and campanulas of all shapes, to say nothing of the innumerable tribes of annuals, of all the outlandish names that ever were invented, are not to be despised even beside the gorgeous exotics, which, arranged with the nicest attention to colour and form, so as to combine the mingled charms of harmony and contrast, seem to look down proudly on their humble compeers.

No pleasanter place for a summer breakfast—always a pretty thing, with its cherries and strawberries and its affluence of nosegays and posies,—no pleasanter place for a summer breakfast-table than my greenhouse. And no pleasanter companion with whom to enjoy it, than the fair friend, as bright as a rosebud and as gay as a lark,—the saucy, merry, charming Kate,—who was waiting to partake our country fare. The birds were singing in the branches; bees, and butterflies, and myriads of gay happy insects were flitting about in the flower-beds. The haymakers were crowding to their light and lively labour in a neighbouring meadow; whilst the pleasant smell of the newly-mown grass was blended with that of a bean-field in full blossom still nearer, and with the thousand odours of the garden;

so that sight, and sound, and smell were a rare compound of all that is delightful to the sense and the feeling.

Nor were higher pleasures wanting. My pretty friend, with all her vivacity, had a keen relish of what is finest in literature and in poetry. An old folio edition of that volume of Dryden called his *Fables*, which contains the glorious *rifacimenti* of parts of Chaucer, and the best of his original poems, happened to be on the table; the fine description of spring in the opening of *The Flower and the Leaf*, led to the picture of Eden in the *Paradise Lost*, and that again to *Comus*, and *Comus* to Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* to Shakspeare and *As You Like It*. The bees and the butterflies, culling for pleasure or for thrift the sweets of my geraniums, were but types of Kate Leslie and myself roving amidst the poets. This does not sound much like a day of distress; but the evil is to come.

A gentle sorrow did arrive, all too soon, in the shape of Kate Leslie's pony-phaeton, which whisked off that charming person as fast as her two long-tailed Arabians could put their feet to the ground. This evil had, however, substantial consolation in the promise of another visit very soon; and I resumed, in peace and quietness, the usual round of idle occupation which forms the morning employment of a country gentleman of small fortune: ordered dinner—minced veal, cold ham, a currant pudding, and a salad, if anybody happens to be curious on the score of my house-keeping; renewed my beau-pots; watered such of my plants as wanted most; mended my gloves; patted Dash; looked at the *Times*; and was just sitting down to work, or to pretend to work, when I was

most pleasantly interrupted by the arrival of some morning visitors, friends from a distance, for whom, after a hearty welcome and some cordial chat, I ordered luncheon, with which order my miseries began.

'The keys, if you please, ma'am, for the wine and the Kennet ale,' said Anne, my female factotum, who rules, as regent, not only the cook and the under-maid and the boy, but the whole family, myself included, and is an actual housekeeper in every respect except that of keeping the keys. 'The keys, ma'am, if you please,' said Anne; and then I found that my keys were not in my right-hand pocket, where they ought to have been; nor in my left-hand pocket, where they might have been; nor in either of my apron-pockets, nor in my work-basket, nor in my reticule,—in short, that my keys were lost!

Now these keys were only two in number, and small enough in dimensions; but then the one opened that important part of me, my writing-desk; and the other contained within itself the specific power over every lock in the house, being no other than the key of the key-drawer; and no chance of picking them, for alas! alas! the locks were Bramah's. So, after a few exclamations, such as, 'What can have become of my keys?' 'Has any one seen my keys?' 'Somebody must have run away with them,' I recollected that, however consolatory to myself such lamentations might be, they would by no means tend to quench the thirst of my guests. I applied myself vigorously to remedy the evil all I could by applications to my nearest neighbours (for time was pressing, and our horse and his master out for the day) to supply, as well as might be, my deficiency. Accordingly I sent to the public-house for their best beer, which, not

being Kennet ale, would not go down ; and to the good-humoured wives of the shoemaker and the baker for their best wine. Fancy to yourselves a decanter of damson wine arriving from one quarter, and a jug of parsnip wine, fresh from the wood, tapped on purpose, from the other, and this for drinkers of Burgundy and Champagne ! Luckily the water was good, and my visitors were good-natured, and comforted me in my affliction, and made a jest of the matter. Really they are a nice family, the Sumners, especially the two young men, to whom I have, they say, taught the taste of spring water.

This trouble passed over lightly enough. But scarcely were they gone before the tax-gatherer came for money—locked up in my desk ! What will the collector say ? And the justices' clerk for warrants, left under my care by the chairman of the bench, and also safely lodged in the same safe repository. What will their worships say to this delinquency ? It will be fortunate if they do not issue a warrant against me in my own person ! My very purse was left by accident in that unlucky writing-desk ; and when our kind neighbours, the Wrights, sent a melon, and I was forced to borrow a shilling to give the messenger, I could bear my loss no longer, and determined to institute a strict search on the instant.

But before the search could begin, in came the pretty little roly-poly Sydneys and Murrays, brats from seven downwards, with their whole train of nurses, and nursery-maids, and nursery-governesses, by invitation, to eat strawberries, and the strawberries were locked up in a cupboard, the key of which was in the unopenable drawer ! And good Farmer Brookes, he too called, sent by his honour for a bottle of Hollands, the right Schiedam ; and the

Schiedam was in the cellar, and the key of the cellar was in the Bramah-locked drawer! And the worthy farmer, who behaved charmingly for a man deprived of his gin, was fain to be content with excuses, like a voter after an election; and the poor children were compelled to put up with promises, like a voter before one; to be sure, they had a few pinks and roses to sweeten their disappointment; but the strawberries were as uncomeatable as the Schiedam.

At last they were gone, and then began the search in good earnest. Every drawer not locked, every room that could be entered, every box that could be opened, was ransacked over and over again for these intolerable keys.

All my goods and chattels were flung together in heaps, and then picked over (a process which would make even new things seem disjointed and shabby), and the quantities of trumpery thereby disclosed, especially in the shape of thimbles, needle-cases, pin-cushions, and scissors, from the different work-baskets, work-boxes, and work-bags (your idle person always abounds in working materials), were astounding. I think there were seventeen pin-cushions of different patterns,—beginning with an old boot and ending with a new guitar. But what was there not? It seemed to me that there were pocketable commodities enough to furnish a second-hand bazaar! Everything was there except my keys.

For four hours did I and my luckless maidens perambulate the house, whilst John, the boy, examined the garden,—until we were all so tired that we were forced to sit down from mere weariness. Saving always the first night of one of my tragedies,—when, though I pique myself on being composed, I can

never manage to sit still,—except on such an occasion, I do not think I ever walked so much at one time in my life. At last I flung myself on a sofa in the greenhouse, and began to revolve the possibility of their being still in the place where I had first missed them.

A jingle in my apron-pocket afforded some hope, but it turned out to be only the clinking of a pair of garden-scissors against his old companion, a silver pencil-case, and that prospect faded away. A slight opening in Dryden's heavily-bound volume gave another glimmer of sunshine, but it proved to be occasioned by a sprig of myrtle in 'Palamon' and 'Arcite,'—Kate Leslie's elegant mark.

This circumstance recalled the recollection of my pretty friend. Could she have been the culprit? And I began to ponder over all the instances of unconscious key-stealing that I had heard of amongst my acquaintance. How my old friend, Aunt Martha, had been so well known for that propensity as to be regularly sought after whenever keys were missing; and my young friend, Edward Harley, from the habit of twisting something round his fingers during his eloquent talk (people used to provide another eloquent talker, Madame de Staël, with a willow-twigg for the purpose), had once caught up and carried away a key, also a Bramah, belonging to a lawyer's bureau, thereby, as the lawyer affirmed, causing the loss of divers lawsuits to himself and his clients. Neither Aunt Martha nor Edward had been near the place; but Kate Leslie might be equally subject to absent fits, and might, in a paroxysm, have abstracted my keys; at all events, it was worth trying. So I wrote her a note to go by post in the evening (for Kate, I grieve to say, lives above twenty miles off), and deter-

mined to await her reply, and think no more of my calamity.

A wise resolution, but, like many other wise resolves, easier made than kept. Even if I could have forgotten my loss, my own household would not have let me.

The cook, with professional callousness, came to demand sugar for the currant-pudding ; and the sugar was in the store-room,—and the store-room was locked. And scarcely had I recovered from this shock before Anne came to inform me that there was no oil in the cruet, and that the flask was in the cellar, snugly reposing, I suppose, by the side of the Schiedam ; so that if for weariness I could have eaten, there was no dinner to eat,—for without the salad who would might take the meat ! However, I being alone, this signified little,—much less than a circumstance of which I was reminded by my note to Kate Leslie, namely, that in my desk were two important letters, one triple, and franked for that very night ; as well as a corrected proof-sheet, for which the press was waiting ; and that all these despatches were to be sent off by post that evening.

Roused by this extremity, I carried my troubles and my writing-desk to my good friend the blacksmith,—a civil, intelligent man, who sympathized with my distress, sighed, shook his head, and uttered the word *Bramah* ! And I thought my perplexity was nearly at its height, when, as I was wending slowly homeward, my sorrows were brought to a climax by my being overtaken by one of the friends whom I admire and honour most in the world,—a person whom all the world admires,—who told me, in her prettiest way, that she was glad to see me so near my own gate, for that she was coming to drink tea with me.

Here was a calamity ! The Lady Mary H., a professed tea drinker,—a green-tea drinker, one (it was a point of sympathy between us) who took nothing but tea and water, and therefore required that gentle and lady-like stimulant in full perfection,—Lady Mary come to drink tea with me, and I with nothing better to offer her than tea from the shop,—the village shop,—bohea, or souchong, or whatever they might call the vile mixture. Tea from the shop for Lady Mary ! Ill-luck could go no farther,—it was the very extremity of small distress !

Her ladyship is, however, as kind as she is charming, and bore our mutual misfortune with great fortitude ; admired my garden, praised my geraniums, and tried to make me forget my calamity. Her kindness was thrown away. I could not even laugh at myself, or find beauty in my flowers, or be pleased with her for flattering them. I tried, however, to do the honours by my plants ; and in placing a large night-scented stock, which was just beginning to emit its odour, upon the table, I struck against the edge and found something hard under my belt.

‘My keys, my keys !’ cried I, untying the riband, and half laughing with delight, as I heard a most pleasant jingle on the floor ; and the lost keys, sure enough, they were,—deposited there, of course, by my own hand,—unfelt, unseen, and unsuspected during our long and weary search. Since the adventure of my dear friend, Mrs. S., who hunted a whole morning for her spectacles while they were comfortably perched upon her nose, I have met with nothing so silly and so perplexing.

But my troubles were over, my affliction was at an end.

The strawberries were sent to the dear little girls ;

and the Schiedam to the good farmer ; and the warrants to the clerk. The tax-gatherer called for his money ; letters and proofs went to the post ; and never in my life did I enjoy a cup of Twining's green tea so much as the one which Lady Mary and I took together after my day of distress.





WALKS IN THE COUNTRY.

FROST.

JANUARY 23RD.—At noon to-day I and my white greyhound, Mayflower, set out for a walk into a very beautiful world,—a sort of silent fairy-land,—a creation of that matchless magician the hoar-frost. There had been just snow enough to cover the earth and all its covers with one sheet of pure and uniform white, and just time enough since the snow had fallen to allow the hedges to be freed of their fleecy load, and clothed with a delicate coating of rime. The atmosphere was deliciously calm ; soft, even mild, in spite of the thermometer ; no perceptible air, but a stillness that might almost be felt ; the sky, rather gray than blue, throwing out in bold relief the snow-covered roofs of our village, and the rimy trees that rise above them, and the sun shining dimly as through a veil, giving a pale fair light, like the moon, only brighter. There was a silence, too, that might become the moon, as we stood at our little gate looking up the quiet street ; a Sabbath-like pause of work and play, rare on a work-day ; nothing was audible but the pleasant hum of frost, that low monotonous sound, which is perhaps the nearest approach that life and nature can make to absolute silence. The very waggons as they come down the hill along the beaten

track of crisp yellowish frost-dust, glide along like shadows; even May's bounding footsteps, at her height of glee and of speed, fall like snow upon snow.

But we shall have noise enough presently: May has stopped at Lizzy's door; and Lizzy, as she sat on the window-sill with her bright rosy face laughing through the casement, has seen her and disappeared. She is coming. No! The key is turning in the door, and sounds of evil omen issue through the key-hole,—sturdy 'Let me outs,' and 'I will goes,' mixed with shrill cries on May and on me from Lizzy, piercing through a low continuous harangue, of which the prominent parts are apologies, chilblains, sliding, broken bones, lollypops, rods, and gingerbread, from Lizzy's careful mother. 'Don't scratch the door, May! Don't roar so, my Lizzy! We'll call for you as we come back.' 'I'll go now! Let me out! I will go!' are the last words of Miss Lizzy. *Mem.*—Not to spoil that child, if I can help it. But I do think her mother might have let the poor little soul walk with us to-day. Nothing worse for children than coddling. Nothing better for chilblains than exercise. Besides, I don't believe she has any; and as to breaking her bones in sliding, I don't suppose there's a slide on the common. These murmuring cogitations have brought us up the hill, and half-way across the light and airy common, with its bright expanse of snow and its clusters of cottages, whose turf fires send such wreathes of smoke sailing up the air, and diffuse such aromatic fragrance around. And now comes the delightful sound of childish voices, ringing with glee and merriment, almost from beneath our feet. Ah, Lizzy, your mother was right! They are shouting from that deep irregular pool, all glass now, where, on two long, smooth, liny slides,

half a dozen ragged urchins are slipping along in tottering triumph. Half a dozen steps bring us to the bank right above them. May can hardly resist the temptation of joining her friends, for most of the varlets are of her acquaintance, especially the rogue who leads the slide,—he with the brimless hat, whose bronzed complexion and white flaxen hair, reversing the usual lights and shadows of the human countenance, give so strange and foreign a look to his flat and comic features. This hobgoblin, Jack Rapley by name, is May's great crony; and she stands on the brink of the steep, irregular descent, her black eyes fixed full upon him, as if she intended him the favour of jumping on his head. She does: she is down, and upon him; but Jack Rapley is not easily to be knocked off his feet. He saw her coming, and in the moment of her leap sprung dexterously off the slide on the rough ice, steadying himself by the shoulder of the next in the file, which unlucky follower, thus unexpectedly checked in his career, fell plump backwards, knocking down the rest of the line like a nest of card-houses. There is no harm done; but there they lie, roaring, kicking, sprawling, in every attitude of comic distress, whilst Jack Rapley and Mayflower, sole authors of this calamity, stand apart from the throng, fondling, and coquetting, and complimenting each other, and very visibly laughing—May in her black eyes, Jack in his wide, close-shut mouth and his whole monkey-face—at their comrades' mischances. I think, Miss May, you may as well come up again, and leave Master Rapley to fight your battles. He'll get out of the scrape. He is a rustic wit,—a sort of Robin Goodfellow,—the sauciest, idlest, cleverest, best-natured boy in the parish; always foremost in mischief, and always ready to do

a good turn. The sages of our village predict sad things of Jack Rapley, so that I am sometimes a little ashamed to confess, before wise people, that I have a lurking predilection for him (in common with other naughty ones), and that I like to hear him talk to May almost as well as she does. 'Come, May!' and up she springs, as light as a bird. The road is gay now,—carts and post-chaises, and girls in red cloaks, and afar off, looking almost like a toy, the coach. It meets us fast and soon. How much happier the walkers look than the riders,—especially the frost-bitten gentleman and the shivering lady with the invisible face, sole passengers of that commodious machine! Hooded, veiled, and bonneted as she is, one sees from her attitude how miserable she would look uncovered.

Another pond, and another noise of children. More sliding? Oh no! This is a sport of higher pretension. Our good neighbour, the lieutenant, skating, and his own pretty little boys and two or three other four-year-old elves standing on the brink in an ecstasy of joy and wonder! Oh, what happy spectators! and what a happy performer! They admiring, he admired, with an ardour and sincerity never excited by all the quadrilles and the spread-eagles of the Seine and the Serpentine. He really skates well though, and I am glad I came this way; for, with all the father's feelings sitting gaily at his heart, it must still gratify the pride of skill to have one spectator at that solitary pond who has seen skating before.

Now we have reached the trees,—the beautiful trees, never so beautiful as to-day! Imagine the effect of a straight and regular double avenue of oaks, nearly a mile long, arching overhead, and closing

into perspective like the roof and columns of a cathedral, every tree and branch encrusted with the bright and delicate congelation of hoar-frost, white and pure as snow, delicate and defined as carved ivory. How beautiful it is, how uniform, how various, how filling, how satiating to the eye and to the mind,—above all, how melancholy! There is a thrilling awfulness, an intense feeling of simple power in that naked and colourless beauty, which falls on the earth like the thoughts of death,—death pure, and glorious, and smiling, but still death. Sculpture has always the same effect on my imagination, and painting never. Colour is life.

We are now at the end of this magnificent avenue, and at the top of a steep eminence commanding a wide view over four counties,—a landscape of snow. A deep lane leads abruptly down the hill, a mere narrow cart-track, sinking between high banks clothed with fern and furze and low broom, crowned with luxuriant hedgerows, and famous for their summer smell of thyme. How lovely these banks are now,—the tall weeds and the gorse fixed and stiffened in the hoar-frost, which fringes round the bright prickly holly, the pendent foliage of the bramble, and the deep orange leaves of the pollard oaks! Oh, this is rime in its loveliest form! And there is still a berry here and there on the holly, 'blushing in its natural coral' through the delicate tracery, still a stray hip or haw for the birds, who abound here always. The poor birds, how tame they are, how sadly tame! There is the beautiful and rare crested wren, 'that shadow of a bird,' as White of Selborne calls it, perched in the middle of the hedge, nestling, as it were, amongst the cold bare boughs, seeking, poor pretty thing, for the warmth it will not

find. And there, farther on, just under the bank, by the slender runlet, which still trickles between its transparent fantastic margin of thin ice, as if it were a thing of life,—there, with a swift, scudding motion, flits, in short low flights, the gorgeous kingfisher, its magnificent plumage of scarlet and blue flashing in the sun, like the glories of some tropical bird. He is come for water to this little spring by the hill-side,—water which even his long bill and slender head can hardly reach, so nearly do the fantastic forms of those garland-like icy margins meet over the tiny stream beneath. It is rarely that one sees the shy beauty so close or so long; and it is pleasant to see him in the grace and beauty of his natural liberty, the only way to look at a bird. We used, before we lived in a street, to fix a little board outside the parlour window, and cover it with bread-crumbs in the hard weather. It was quite delightful to see the pretty things come and feed, to conquer their shyness, and do away their mistrust. First came the more social tribes, ‘the robin red-breast and the wren,’ cautiously, suspiciously, picking up a crumb on the wing, with the little keen bright eye fixed on the window; then they would stop for two pecks; then stay till they were satisfied. The shyer birds, tamed by their example, came next; and at last one saucy fellow of a blackbird—a sad glutton, he would clear the board in two minutes—used to tap his yellow bill against the window for more. How we loved the fearless confidence of that fine, frank-hearted creature! And surely he loved us. I wonder the practice is not more general. ‘May! May! naughty May!’ She has frightened away the kingfisher; and now, in her coaxing penitence, she is covering me with snow. ‘Come, pretty May! it is time to go home.’

THAW.

January 28th.—We have had rain, and snow, and frost, and rain again,—four days of absolute confinement. Now it is a thaw and a flood; but our light gravelly soil, and country boots, and country hardihood, will carry us through. What a dripping, comfortless day it is! just like the last days of November: no sun, no sky, grey or blue; one low, overhanging, dark, dismal cloud, like London smoke. Mayflower is out coursing too, and Lizzy gone to school. Never mind. Up the hill again! Walk we must. Oh, what a watery world to look back upon! Thames, Kennet, Loddon—all overflowed; our famous town, inland once, turned into a sort of Venice; C. park converted into an island; and the long range of meadows from B. to W. one huge unnatural lake, with trees growing out of it. Oh, what a watery world! I will look at it no longer. I will walk on. The road is alive again. Noise is re-born. Waggons creak, horses splash, carts rattle, and pattens paddle through the dirt with more than their usual clink. The common has its old fine tints of green and brown, and its old variety of inhabitants,—horses, cows, sheep, pigs, and donkeys. The ponds are unfrozen, except where some melancholy piece of melting ice floats sullenly on the water; and cackling geese and gabbling ducks have replaced the lieutenant and Jack Rapley. The avenue is chill and dark, the hedges are dripping, the lanes knee-deep, and all nature is in a state of ‘dissolution and thaw.’



THE FIRST PRIMROSE.

MARCH 6TH.—Fine March weather : boisterous, blustering, much wind and squalls of rain ; and yet the sky, where the clouds are swept away, deliciously blue, with snatches of sunshine, bright and clear and healthful ; and the roads, in spite of the slight glittering showers, crisply dry. Altogether the day is tempting, very tempting. It will not do for the dear common, that windmill of a walk ; but the close sheltered lanes at the bottom of the hill, which keep out just enough of the stormy air, and let in all the sun, will be delightful. Past our old house, and round by the winding lanes, and the workhouse, and across the lea, and so into the turnpike road again,—that is our route for to-day. Forth we set, Mayflower and I, rejoicing in the sunshine, and still more in the wind, which gives such an intense feeling of existence, and, co-operating with brisk motion, sets our blood and our spirits in a glow. For mere physical pleasure there is nothing, perhaps, equal to the enjoyment of being drawn, in a light carriage, against such a wind as this, by a blood horse at his height of speed. Walking comes next to it ; but walking is not quite so luxurious or so spiritual, not quite so much what one fancies of flying, or being carried above the clouds in a balloon.

Nevertheless a walk is a good thing, especially under this southern hedgerow, where nature is just beginning to live again: the periwinkles, with their starry blue flowers and their shining myrtle-like leaves, garlanding the bushes; woodbines and elder trees pushing out their small swelling buds; and grasses and mosses springing forth in every variety of brown and green. Here we are at the corner where four lanes meet, or rather where a passable road of stones and gravel crosses an impassable one of beautiful but treacherous turf, and where the small white farm-house, scarcely larger than a cottage, and the well-stocked rickyard behind, tell of comfort and order, but leave all unguessed the great riches of the master. How he became so rich is almost a puzzle; for though the farm be his own, it is not large; and though prudent and frugal on ordinary occasions, Farmer Barnard is no miser. His horses, dogs, and pigs are the best kept in the parish,—May herself, although her beauty be injured by her fatness, half envies the plight of his bitch Fly; his wife's gowns and shawls cost as much again as any shawls or gowns in the village; his dinner parties (to be sure they are not frequent) display twice the ordinary quantity of good things,—two couples of ducks, two dishes of green peas, two turkey poults, two gammons of bacon, two plum-puddings; moreover, he keeps a single-horse chaise, and has built and endowed a Methodist chapel. Yet is he the richest man in these parts. Everything prospers with him. Money drifts about him like snow. He looks like a rich man. There is a sturdy squareness of face and figure, a good-humoured obstinacy, a civil importance. He never boasts of his wealth, or gives himself undue airs; but nobody can meet him at market or vestry without

finding out immediately that he is the richest man there. They have no child to all this money; but there is an adopted nephew, a fine spirited lad, who may, perhaps, some day or other play the part of a fountain to the reservoir.

Now turn up the wide road till we come to the open common, with its park-like trees, its beautiful stream wandering and twisting along, and its rural bridge. Here we turn again, past that other white farmhouse, half-hidden by the magnificent elms which stand before it. Ah! riches dwell not there, but there is found the next best thing,—an industrious and light-hearted poverty. Twenty years ago, Rachel Hilton was the prettiest and merriest lass in the country. Her father, an old gamekeeper, had retired to a village alehouse, where his good beer, his social humour, and his black-eyed daughter, brought much custom. She had lovers by the score; but Joseph White, the dashing and lively son of an opulent farmer, carried off the fair Rachel. They married and settled here, and here they live still, as merrily as ever, with fourteen children of all ages and sizes, from nineteen years to nineteen months, working harder than any people in the parish, and enjoying themselves more. I would match them for labour and laughter against any family in England. She is a blithe, jolly dame, whose beauty has amplified into comeliness; he is tall, and thin, and bony, with sinews like whipcord, a strong lively voice, a sharp weather-beaten face, and eyes and lips that smile and brighten when he speaks into a most contagious hilarity. They are very poor, and I often wish them richer; but I don't know—perhaps it might put them out.

Quite close to Farmer White's is a little ruinous cottage, white-washed once, and now in a sad state of

betweenity, where dangling stockings and shirts, swelled by the wind, drying in a neglected garden, give signal of a washerwoman. There dwells, at present in single blessedness, Betty Adams, the wife of our sometimes gardener. I never saw any one who so much reminded me in person of that lady whom everybody knows, Mistress Meg Merrilees,—as tall, as grizzled, as stately, as dark, as gipsy-looking, bonneted and gowned like her prototype, and almost as oracular. Here the resemblance ceases. Mrs. Adams is a perfectly honest, industrious, painstaking person, who earns a good deal of money by washing and charring, and spends it in other luxuries than tidiness,—in green tea, and gin, and snuff. Her husband lives in a great family ten miles off. He is a capital gardener, or rather he would be so, if he were not too ambitious. He undertakes all things, and finishes none. But a smooth tongue, a knowing look, and a great capacity of labour, carry him through. Let him but like his ale and his master, and he will do work enough for four. Give him his own way, and his full quantum, and nothing comes amiss to him.

Ah, May is bounding forward! Her silly heart leaps at the sight of the old place, and so, in good truth, does mine. What a pretty place it was, or rather, how pretty I thought it! I suppose I should have thought any place so where I had spent eighteen happy years. But it was really pretty. A large, heavy white house, in the simplest style, surrounded by fine oaks and elms, and tall massy plantations shaded down into a beautiful lawn by wild overgrown shrubs, bowery acacias, ragged sweet-briers, promontories of dog-wood, and Portugal laurel, and bays, overhung by laburnum and bird-cherry; a long piece of water letting light into the picture, and looking just

like a natural stream, the banks as rude and wild as the shrubbery, interspersed with broom, and furze, and bramble, and pollard oaks covered with ivy and honeysuckle; the whole enclosed by an old mossy park paling, and terminating in a series of rich meadows, richly planted. This is an exact description of the home which, three years ago, it nearly broke my heart to leave. What a tearing up by the root it was! I have pitied cabbage-plants and celery, and all transplantable things, ever since; though, in common with them and with other vegetables, the first agony of the transportation being over, I have taken such firm and tenacious hold of my new soil, that I would not for the world be pulled up again, even to be restored to the old beloved ground,—not even if its beauty were undiminished, which is by no means the case; for in those three years it has thrice changed masters, and every successive possessor has brought the curse of improvement upon the place; so that, between filling up the water to cure dampness, cutting down trees to let in prospects, planting to keep them out, shutting up windows to darken the inside of the house (by which means one end looks precisely as an eight of spades would do that should have the misfortune to lose one of his corner pips), and building colonnades to lighten the out, added to a general clearance of pollards, and brambles, and ivy, and honeysuckles, and park palings, and irregular shrubs, the poor place is so transmogrified, that if it had its old looking-glass, the water, back again, it would not know its own face. And yet I love to haunt round about it; so does May. Her particular attraction is a certain broken bank full of rabbit burrows, into which she insinuates her long pliant head and neck, and tears her pretty feet by vain scratchings; mine is

a warm sunny hedgerow, in the same remote field, famous for early flowers. Never was a spot more variously flowery: primroses yellow, lilac, white; violets of either hue; cowslips, oxlips, arums, orchises, wild hyacinths, ground-ivy, pansies, strawberries, heart's-ease, formed a small part of the flora of that wild hedgerow. How profusely they covered the sunny open slope under the weeping birch, 'the lady of the woods!' and how often have I started to see the early innocent brown snake, who loved the spot as well as I did, winding along the young blossoms, or rustling amongst the fallen leaves! There are primrose leaves already, and short green buds, but no flowers,—not even in that furze cradle so full of roots, where they used to blow as in a basket. No, my May, no rabbits! no primroses! We may as well get over the gate into the woody winding lane, which will bring us home again.

Here we are making the best of our way between the old elms that arch so solemnly overhead, dark and sheltered even now. They say that a spirit haunts this deep pool,—a white lady without a head. I cannot say that I have seen her, often as I have paced this lane at deep midnight, to hear the nightingales and look at the glow-worms; but there, better and rarer than a thousand ghosts, dearer even than nightingales or glow-worms, there is a primrose, the first of the year,—a tuft of primroses, springing, in yonder sheltered nook, from the mossy roots of an old willow, and living again in the clear bright pool. Oh, how beautiful they are!—three fully blown, and two bursting buds! How glad I am I came this way! They are not to be reached. Even Jack Rapley's love of the difficult and the unattainable would fail him here; May herself could not stand on that steep

bank. So much the better. Who would wish to disturb them? There they live in their innocent and fragrant beauty, sheltered from the storms, and rejoicing in the sunshine, and looking as if they could feel their happiness. Who would disturb them? Oh, how glad I am I came this way home!





VIOLETING.

MARCH 27TH.—It is a dull grey morning, with a dewy feeling in the air; fresh, but not windy; cool, but not cold; the very day for a person newly arrived from the heat, the glare, the noise, and the fever of London, to plunge into the remotest labyrinths of the country, and regain the repose of mind, the calmness of heart, which has been lost in that great Babel. I must go violeting,—it is a necessity,—and I must go alone: the sound of a voice, even my Lizzy's, the touch of Mayflower's head, even the bounding of her elastic foot, would disturb the serenity of feeling which I am trying to recover. I shall go quite alone, with my little basket, twisted like a bee-hive, which I love so well, because *she* gave it to me, and kept sacred to violets and to those whom I love; and I shall get out of the high-road the moment I can. I would not meet any one just now, even of those whom I best like to meet.

Ha! Is not that group,—a gentleman on a blood horse, a lady keeping pace with him so gracefully and easily—see how prettily her veil waves in the wind created by her own rapid motion!—and that gay, gallant boy, on the gallant white Arabian,

curveting at their side, but ready to spring before them every instant,—is not that chivalrous-looking party Mr. and Mrs. M. and dear B.? No! the servant is in a different livery. It is some of the ducal family, and one of their young Etonians. I may go on. I shall meet no one now; for I have fairly left the road, and am crossing the lea by one of those wandering paths amidst the gorse, and the heath, and the low broom, which the sheep and lambs have made,—a path turfy, elastic, thymy, and sweet, even at this season.

We have the good fortune to live in an unenclosed parish, and may thank the wise obstinacy of two or three sturdy farmers, and the lucky unpopularity of a ranting madcap lord of the manor, for preserving the delicious green patches, the islets of wilderness amidst cultivation, which form, perhaps, the peculiar beauty of English scenery. The common that I am passing now—the lea, as it is called—is one of the loveliest of these favoured spots. It is a little sheltered scene, retiring, as it were, from the village; sunk amidst higher lands,—hills would be almost too grand a word; edged on one side by one gay high-road, and intersected by another; and surrounded by a most picturesque confusion of meadows, cottages, farms, and orchards; with a great pond in one corner, unusually bright and clear, giving a delightful cheerfulness and daylight to the picture. The swallows haunt that pond; so do the children. There is a merry group round it now; I have seldom seen it without one. Children love water,—clear, bright, sparkling water; it excites and feeds their curiosity; it is motion and life.

The path that I am treading leads to a less lively spot, to that large heavy building on one side of the

common, whose solid wings, jutting out far beyond the main body, occupy three sides of a square, and give a cold, shadowy look to the court. On one side is a gloomy garden, with an old man digging in it, laid out in straight dark beds of vegetables, potatoes, cabbages, onions, beans, all earthy and mouldy as a newly dug grave. Not a flower or flowering shrub! Not a rose-tree or currant-bush! Nothing but for sober, melancholy use. Oh, different from the long irregular slips of the cottage gardens, with their gay bunches of polyanthuses and crocuses, their wall-flowers sending sweet odours through the narrow casement, and their gooseberry trees bursting into a brilliancy of leaf, whose vivid greenness has the effect of a blossom on the eye! Oh, how different! On the other side of this gloomy abode is a meadow of that deep, intense emerald hue which denotes the presence of stagnant water, surrounded by willows at regular distances, and, like the garden, separated from the common by a wide, moat-like ditch. That is the parish workhouse. All about it is solid, substantial, useful; but so dreary, so cold, so dark! There are children in the court, and yet all is silent. I always hurry past that place as if it were a prison. Restraint, sickness, age, extreme poverty, misery, which I have no power to remove or alleviate,—these are the ideas, the feelings, which the sight of those walls excites; yet perhaps, if not certainly, they contain less of that extreme desolation than the morbid fancy is apt to paint. There will be found order, cleanliness, food, clothing, warmth, refuge for the homeless, medicine and attendance for the sick, rest and sufficiency for old age, and sympathy, the true and active sympathy which the poor show to the poor, for the

unhappy. There may be worse places than a parish workhouse, and yet I hurry past it. The feeling, the prejudice, will not be controlled.

The end of the dreary garden edges off into a close-sheltered lane, wandering and winding, like a rivulet, in gentle 'sinuosities' (to use a word once applied by Mr. Wilberforce to the Thames at Henley), amidst green meadows, all alive with cattle, sheep, and beautiful lambs, in the very spring and pride of their tottering prettiness; or fields of arable land, more lively still with troops of stooping bean-setters, women and children, in all varieties of costume and colour; and ploughs and harrows, with their whistling boys and steady carters, going through, with a slow and plodding industry, the main business of this busy season. What work bean-setting is! What a reverse of the position assigned to man to distinguish him from the beasts of the field! Only think of stooping for six, eight, ten hours a day, drilling holes in the earth with a little stick, and then dropping in the beans one by one. They are paid according to the quantity they plant; and some of the poor women used to be accused of clumping them,—that is to say, of dropping more than one bean into a hole. It seems to me, considering the temptation, that not to clump is to be at the very pinnacle of human virtue.

Another turn in the lane, and we come to the old house standing amongst the high elms,—the old farm-house, which always, I don't know why, carries back my imagination to Shakspeare's days. It is a long, low, irregular building, with one room at an angle from the house, covered with ivy—fine white-veined ivy; the first floor of the main building projecting and supported by oaken beams, and one

of the windows below, with its old casement and long narrow panes, forming the half of a shallow hexagon. A porch, with seats in it, surmounted by a pinnacle, pointed roofs, and clustered chimneys, complete the picture. Alas! it is little else but a picture. The very walls are crumbling to decay under a careless landlord and ruined tenant.

Now, a few yards farther and I reach the bank. Ah! I smell them already,—their exquisite perfume steams and lingers in this moist, heavy air. Through this little gate, and along the green south bank of this green wheat-field, and they burst upon me, the lovely violets, in tenfold loveliness. The ground is covered with them, white and purple, enamelling the short dewy grass, looking but the more vividly coloured under the dull, leaden sky. There they lie, by hundreds, by thousands. In former years I have been used to watch them from the tiny green bud, till one or two stole into bloom. They never came on me before in such a sudden and luxuriant glow of simple beauty,—and I do really owe one pure and genuine pleasure to feverish London! How beautifully they are placed, too, on this sloping bank, with the palm branches waving over them, full of early bees, and mixing their honey scent with the more delicate violet odour! How transparent and smooth and lusty are the branches, full of sap and life! And there, just by the old mossy root, is a superb tuft of primroses, with a yellow butterfly hovering over them, like a flower floating on the air. What happiness to sit on this tufty knoll, and fill my basket with the blossoms! What a renewal of heart and mind! To inhabit such a scene of peace and sweetness is again to be fearless, gay, and gentle as a child. Then it is that thought becomes poetry, and feeling religion.

Then it is that we are happy and good. Oh, that my whole life could pass so, floating on blissful and innocent sensation, enjoying in peace and gratitude the common blessings of nature ; thankful, above all, for the simple habits, the healthful temperament, which render them so dear ! Alas ! who may dare expect a life of such happiness ? But I can at least snatch and prolong the fleeting pleasure : can fill my basket with pure flowers, and my heart with pure thoughts ; can gladden my little home with their sweetness ; can divide my treasures with one, a dear one, who cannot seek them ; can see them when I shut my eyes, and dream of them when I fall asleep.





THE COPSE.

APRIL 18TH.—Sad wintry weather ; a north-east wind ; a sun that puts out one's eyes, without affording the slightest warmth ; dryness that chaps lips and hands like a frost in December ; rain that comes chilly and arrowy, like hail in January ; nature at a dead pause ; no seeds up in the garden ; no leaves out in the hedgerows ; no cowslips swinging their pretty bells in the fields ; no nightingales in the dingles ; no swallows skimming round the great pond ; no cuckoos (that ever I should miss that rascally sonneteer !) in any part. Nevertheless there is something of a charm in this wintry spring, this putting back of the seasons. If the flower-clock must stand still for a month or two, could it choose a better time than that of the primroses and violets ? I never remember (and for such gauds my memory, if not very good for aught of wise or useful, may be trusted) such an affluence of the one or such a duration of the other. Primrosy is the epithet which this year will retain in my recollection. Hedge, ditch, meadow, field, even the very paths and highways, are set with them ; but their chief habitat is a certain copse, about a mile off, where they are spread like a carpet, and where I go to visit them rather oftener than quite comports with the dignity

of a lady of mature age. I am going thither this very afternoon, and May and her company are going too.

This Mayflower of mine is a strange animal. Instinct and imitation make in her an approach to reason which is sometimes almost startling. She mimics all that she sees us do with the dexterity of a monkey, and far more of gravity and apparent purpose: cracks nuts and eats them; gathers currants and severs them from the stalk with the most delicate nicety; filches and munches apples and pears; is as dangerous in an orchard as a schoolboy; smells to flowers; smiles at meeting; answers in a pretty lively voice when spoken to (sad pity that the language should be unknown!), and has greatly the advantage of us in a conversation, inasmuch as our meaning is certainly clear to her;—all this, and a thousand amusing prettinesses (to say nothing of her canine feat of bringing her game straight to her master's feet, and refusing to resign it to any hand but his), does my beautiful greyhound perform untaught, by the mere effect of imitation and sagacity. Well, May, at the end of the coursing season, having lost Brush, our old spaniel, her great friend, and the blue greyhound Mariette, her comrade and rival, both of which fourfooted worthies were sent out to keep for the summer, began to find solitude a weary condition, and to look abroad for company. Now it so happened that the same suspension of sport which had reduced our little establishment from three dogs to one, had also dispersed the splendid kennel of a celebrated courser in our neighbourhood, three of whose finest young dogs came home 'to their walk' (as the sporting phrase goes) at the collar-maker's in our village. May accordingly, on the first morning of her solitude (she had never taken the slightest notice of her neigh-

bours before, although they had sojourned in our street upwards of a fortnight), bethought herself of the timely resource offered to her by the vicinity of these canine beaux, and went up boldly and knocked at their stable door, which was already very commodiously on the half-latch. The three dogs came out with much alertness and gallantry, and May, declining apparently to enter their territories, brought them off to her own. This manœuvre has been repeated every day with one variation. Of the three dogs, the first a brindle, the second a yellow, and the third a black, the two first only are now allowed to walk or consort with her, and the last, poor fellow! for no fault that I can discover except May's caprice, is driven away not only by the fair lady, but even by his old companions,—is, so to say, sent to Coventry. Of her two permitted followers, the yellow gentleman, Saladin by name, is decidedly the favourite. He is, indeed, May's shadow, and will walk with me whether I choose or not. It is quite impossible to get rid of him unless by discarding Miss May also; and to accomplish a walk in the country without her would be like an adventure of Don Quixote without his faithful squire Sancho.

So forth we set, May and I, and Saladin and the brindle,—May and myself walking with the sedateness and decorum befitting our sex and age (she is five years old this grass, rising six); the young things, for the Soldan and the brindle are (not meaning any disrespect) little better than puppies, frisking and frolicking as best pleased them.

Our route lay for the first part along the sheltered quiet lanes which lead to our old habitation,—a way never trodden by me without peculiar and home-like feelings, full of the recollections, the pains and plea-

tures, of other days. But we are not to talk sentiment now; even May would not understand that maudlin language. We must get on. What a wintry hedge-row this is for the eighteenth of April! Primrosy, to be sure, abundantly spangled with those stars of the earth; but so bare, so leafless, so cold! The wind whistles through the brown boughs as in winter. Even the early elder shoots, which do make an approach to springiness, look brown, and the small leaves of the woodbine, which have also ventured to peep forth, are of a sad purple, frost-bitten, like a dairymaid's elbows on a snowy morning. The very birds, in this season of pairing and building, look chilly and uncomfortable, and their nests!—'O Saladin! come away from the hedge! Don't you see that what puzzles you and makes you leap up in the air is a redbreast's nest? Don't you see the pretty speckled eggs? Don't you hear the poor hen calling as it were for help? Come here this moment, sir!' And by good luck Saladin (who for a Paynim has tolerable qualities) comes, before he has touched the nest, or before his playmate the brindle, the less manageable of the two, has espied it.

Now we go round the corner and cross the bridge, where the common, with its clear stream winding between clumps of elms, assumes so park-like an appearance. Who is this approaching so slowly and majestically, this square bundle of petticoat and cloak, this road-waggon of a woman? It is, it must be, Mrs. Sally Mearing, the completest specimen within my knowledge of farmeresses (may I be allowed that innovation in language?) as they were. It can be nobody else.

Mrs. Sally Mearing, when I first became acquainted with her, occupied, together with her father (a super-

annuated man of ninety), a large farm very near our former habitation. It had been anciently a great manor-farm or court-house, and was still a stately, substantial building, whose lofty halls and spacious chambers gave an air of grandeur to the common offices to which they were applied. Traces of gilding might yet be seen on the panels which covered the walls, and on the huge carved chimney-pieces which rose almost to the ceilings; and the marble tables and the inlaid oak staircase still spoke of the former grandeur of the court. Mrs. Sally corresponded well with the date of her mansion, although she troubled herself little with its dignity. She was thoroughly of the old school, and had a most comfortable contempt for the new; rose at four in winter and summer, breakfasted at six, dined at eleven in the forenoon, supped at five, and was regularly in bed before eight, except when the hay-time or the harvest imperiously required her to sit up till sunset,—a necessity to which she submitted with no very good grace. To a deviation from these hours, and to the modern iniquities of white aprons, cotton stockings, and muslin handkerchiefs (Mrs. Sally herself always wore check, black worsted, and a sort of yellow compound which she was wont to call *susy*), together with the invention of drill-plough and thrashing machines, and other agricultural novelties, she failed not to attribute all the mishaps or misdoings of the whole parish. The last-mentioned discovery especially aroused her indignation. Oh, to hear her descant on the merits of the flail, wielded by a stout right arm, such as she had known in her youth (for by her account there was as great a deterioration in bones and sinews as in the other implements of husbandry), was enough to make the very inventor break his machine! She would even

take up her favourite instrument, and thrash the air herself by way of illustrating her argument ; and, to say truth, few men in these degenerate days could have matched the stout, brawny, muscular limb which Mrs. Sally displayed at sixty-five.

In spite of this contumacious rejection of agricultural improvements, the world went well with her at Court Farm. A good landlord, an easy rent, incessant labour, unremitting frugality, and excellent times, insured a regular though moderate profit ; and she lived on, grumbling and prospering, flourishing and complaining; till two misfortunes befell her at once,—her father died, and her lease expired. The loss of her father, although a bedridden man, turned of ninety, who could not in the course of nature have been expected to live long, was a terrible shock to a daughter who was not so much younger as to be without fears for her own life, and who had, besides, been so used to nursing the good old man, and looking to his little comforts, that she missed him as a mother would miss an ailing child. The expiration of the lease was a grievance and a puzzle of a different nature. Her landlord would have willingly retained his excellent tenant, but not on the terms on which she then held the land, which had not varied for fifty years ; so that poor Mrs. Sally had the misfortune to find rent rising and prices sinking both at the same moment,—a terrible solecism in political economy. Even this, however, I believe she would have endured, rather than have quitted the house where she was born, and to which all her ways and notions were adapted, had not a priggish steward, as much addicted to improvement and reform as she was to precedent and established usages, insisted on binding her by lease to spread a certain number of loads of chalk on

every field. This tremendous innovation, for never had that novelty in manure whitened the crofts and pightles of Court Farm, decided her at once. She threw the proposals into the fire, and left the place in a week.

Her choice of a habitation occasioned some wonder and much amusement in our village world. To be sure, upon the verge of seventy, an old maid may be permitted to dispense with the more rigid punctilio of her class ; but Mrs. Sally had always been so tenacious on the score of character, so very a prude, so determined an avoider of the 'men folk' (as she was wont contemptuously to call them), that we all were conscious of something like astonishment, on finding that she and her little handmaid had taken up their abode in one end of a spacious farm-house belonging to the bluff old bachelor, George Robinson, of the Lea. Now Farmer Robinson was quite as notorious for his aversion to petticoated things as Mrs. Sally for her hatred to the unfeathered bipeds who wear doublet and hose, so that there was a little astonishment in that quarter too, and plenty of jests, which the honest farmer speedily silenced, by telling all who joked on the subject that he had given his lodger fair warning, that, let people say what they would, he was quite determined not to marry her ; so that if she had any views that ways it would be better for her to go elsewhere. This declaration, which must be admitted to have been more remarkable for frankness than civility, made, however, no ill impression on Mrs. Sally. To the farmer's she went, and at his house she lives still, with her little maid, her tabby cat, a decrepit sheep-dog, and much of the lumber of Court Farm, which she could not find in her heart to part from. There she follows her old ways and her old

hours, untempted by matrimony, and unassailed (as far as I hear) by love or by scandal, with no other grievance than an occasional dearth of employment for herself and her young lass (even pewter dishes do not always want scouring), and now and then a twinge of the rheumatism.

Here she is that good relique of the olden time,—for, in spite of her whims and prejudices, a better and a kinder woman never lived,—here she is, with the hood of her red cloak pulled over her close black bonnet, of that silk which once (it may be presumed) was fashionable, since it is still called mode, and her whole stout figure huddled up in a miscellaneous and most substantial covering of thick petticoats, gowns, aprons, shawls, and cloaks,—a weight which it requires the strength of a thrasher to walk under,—here she is, with her square, honest visage and her loud, frank voice, and we hold a pleasant disjointed chat on rheumatisms and early chickens, bad weather, and hats with feathers in them,—the last exceedingly sore subject being introduced by poor Jane Davis (a cousin of Mrs. Sally), who, passing us in a beaver bonnet on her road from school, stopped to drop her little curtsey, and was soundly scolded for her civility. Jane, who is a gentle, humble, smiling lass, about twelve years old, receives so many rebukes from her worthy relative, and bears them so meekly, that I should not wonder if they were to be followed by a legacy: I sincerely wish they may. Well, at last we said good-bye; when, on inquiring my destination, and hearing that I was bent to the ten-acre copse (part of the farm which she ruled so long), she stopped me to tell a dismal story of two sheep-stealers who, sixty years ago, were found hidden in that copse, and only taken after great difficulty and resistance, and

the maiming of a peace-officer. 'Pray don't go there, miss! For mercy's sake don't be so venturesome! Think if they should kill you!' were the last words of Mrs. Sally.

Many thanks for her care and kindness! But, without being at all foolhardy in general, I have no great fear of the sheep-stealers of sixty years ago. Even if they escaped hanging for that exploit, I should greatly doubt their being in case to attempt another. So on we go,—down the short shady lane, and out on the pretty retired green, shut in by fields and hedge-rows, which we must cross to reach the copse. How lively this green nook is to-day, half covered with cows, and horses, and sheep! And how glad these frolicsome greyhounds are to exchange the hard gravel of the high road for this pleasant short turf, which seems made for their gambols! How beautifully they are at play, chasing each other round and round in lessening circles, darting off at all kinds of angles, crossing and recrossing May, and trying to win her sedateness into a game at romps, turning round on each other with gay defiance, pursuing the cows and the colts, leaping up as if to catch the crows in their flight; all in their harmless and innocent—— 'Ah, wretches! villains! rascals! four-footed mischiefs! canine plagues! Saladin! Brindle!' They are after the sheep. 'Saladin, I say!' They have actually singled out that pretty spotted lamb. 'Brutes, if I catch you! Saladin! Brindle!' We shall be taken up for sheep-stealing presently ourselves. They have chased the poor little lamb into a ditch, and are mounting guard over it, standing at bay. 'Ah, wretches, I have you now! For shame, Saladin! Get away, Brindle! See how good May is. Off with you, brutes! For shame! For shame!' and, brandishing

a handkerchief, which could hardly be an efficient instrument of correction, I succeeded in driving away the two puppies, who after all meant nothing more than play, although it was somewhat rough, and rather too much in the style of the old fable of the boys and the frogs. May is gone after them, perhaps to scold them; for she has been as grave as a judge during the whole proceeding, keeping ostentatiously close to me, and taking no part whatever in the mischief.

The poor little pretty lamb! here it lies on the bank quite motionless, frightened I believe to death, for certainly those villains never touched it. It does not stir. Does it breathe? Oh yes, it does! It is alive, safe enough. Look, it opens its eyes, and, finding the coast clear and its enemies far away, it springs up in a moment and gallops to its dam, who has stood bleating the whole time at a most respectful distance. Who would suspect a lamb of so much simple cunning? I really thought the pretty thing was dead; and now how glad the ewe is to recover her curling spotted little one! How fluttered they look! Well, this adventure has flurried me too; between fright and running, I warrant you my heart beats as fast as the lamb's.

Ah! here is the shameless villain Saladin, the cause of the commotion, thrusting his slender nose into my hand to beg pardon and make up! 'Oh, wickedest of Soldans! Most iniquitous pagan! Soul of a Turk!' But there is no resisting the good-humoured creature's penitence. I must pat him. 'There! there! Now we will go to the copse. I am sure we shall find no worse malefactors than ourselves—shall we, May?—and the sooner we get out of sight of the sheep the better; for Brindle seems meditating another

attack. *Allons, messieurs*, over this gate, across this meadow, and here is the copse.'

How boldly that superb ash tree, with its fine silver bark, rises from the bank! and what a fine entrance it makes with the holly beside it, which also deserves to be called a tree! But here we are in the copse. Ah! only one-half of the underwood was cut last year, and the other is at its full growth: hazel, brier, woodbine, bramble, forming one impenetrable thicket, and almost uniting with the lower branches of the elms, and oaks, and beeches, which rise at regular distances overhead. No foot can penetrate that dense and thorny entanglement; but there is a walk all round by the side of the wide sloping bank, walk and bank and copse carpeted with primroses, whose fresh and balmy odour impregnates the very air. Oh, how exquisitely beautiful! And it is not the primroses only, those gems of flowers, but the natural mosaic of which they form a part,—that net-work of ground-ivy, with its lilac blossoms and the subdued tint of its purplish leaves, those rich mosses, those enamelled wild hyacinths, those spotted arums, and above all those wreaths of ivy linking all those flowers together with chains of leaves more beautiful than blossoms, whose white veins seem swelling amidst the deep green or splendid brown;—it is the whole earth that is so beautiful! Never surely were primroses so richly set, and never did primroses better deserve such a setting. There they are of their own lovely yellow, the hue to which they have given a name, the exact tint of the butterfly that overhangs them (the first I have seen this year! can spring really be coming at last?)—sprinkled here and there with tufts of a reddish purple, and others of the purest white, as some accident of soil affects that strange and inscrutable

operation of nature, the colouring of flowers. Oh, how fragrant they are ! and how pleasant it is to sit in this sheltered copse, listening to the fine creaking of the wind amongst the branches, the most unearthly of sounds, with this gay tapestry under our feet, and the wood-pigeons flitting from tree to tree, and mixing the deep note of love with the elemental music !

Yes, spring is coming ! Wood-pigeons, butterflies, and sweet flowers all give token of the sweetest of the seasons. Spring is coming. The hazel stalks are swelling and putting forth their pale tassels, the satin palms with their honeyed odours are out on the willow, and the last lingering winter-berries are dropping from the hawthorn, and making way for the bright and blossomy leaves.





THE WOOD.

APRIL 20TH.—Spring is actually come now, with the fulness and almost the suddenness of a northern summer. To-day is completely April,—clouds and sunshine, wind and showers; blossoms on the trees, grass in the fields, swallows by the ponds, snakes in the hedgerows, nightingales in the thickets, and cuckoos everywhere. My young friend Ellen G. is going with me this evening to gather wood-sorrel. She never saw that most elegant plant, and is so delicate an artist that the introduction will be a mutual benefit: Ellen will gain a subject worthy of her pencil, and the pretty weed will live,—no small favour to a flower almost as transitory as the gum cistus: duration is the only charm which it wants, and that Ellen will give it. The weather is, to be sure, a little threatening, but we are not people to mind the weather when we have an object in view; we shall certainly go in quest of the wood-sorrel, and will take May, provided we can escape May's followers; for since the adventure of the lamb, Saladin has had an affair with a gander, furious in defence of his goslings, in which *rencontre* the gander came off conqueror; and as geese abound in the wood to which we are going (called by the country people the Pinge), and the victory may not

always incline to the right side, I should be very sorry to lead the soldan to fight his battles over again. We will take nobody but May.

So saying, we proceeded on our way through winding lanes, between hedgerows tenderly green, till we reached the hatch-gate, with the white cottage beside it embosomed in fruit trees, which forms the entrance to the Pinge, and in a moment the whole scene was before our eyes.

‘Is not this beautiful, Ellen?’ The-answer could hardly be other than a glowing rapid ‘Yes!’ A wood is generally a pretty place; but this wood,—imagine a small forest, full of glades and sheep-walks, surrounded by irregular cottages with their blooming orchards, a clear stream winding about the brakes, and a road intersecting it, and giving life and light to the picture, and you will have a faint idea of the Pinge. Every step was opening a new point of view, a fresh combination of glade and path and thicket. The accessories, too, were changing every moment. Ducks, geese, pigs, and children giving way, as we advanced into the wood, to sheep and forest ponies; and they again disappearing as we became more entangled in its mazes, till we heard nothing but the song of the nightingale, and saw only the silent flowers.

What a piece of fairy-land! The tall elms overhead just bursting into tender vivid leaf, with here and there a hoary oak or a silver-barked beech, every twig swelling with the brown buds, and yet not quite stripped of the tawny foliage of autumn; tall hollies and hawthorn beneath, with their crisp brilliant leaves mixed with the white blossoms of the sloe, and woven together with garlands of woodbines and wild-briers;—what a fairy-land!

Primroses, cowslips, pansies, and the regular open-eyed white blossom of the wood anemone (or, to use the more elegant Hampshire name, the windflower), were set under our feet as thick as daisies in a meadow ; but the pretty weed that we came to seek was coyer ; and Ellen began to fear that we had mistaken the place or the season. At last she had herself the pleasure of finding it under a brake of holly. 'Oh, look ! look ! I am sure that this is the wood-sorrel ! Look at the pendent white flower, shaped like a snowdrop and veined with purple streaks, and the beautiful trefoil leaves folded like a heart ; some, the young ones, so vividly yet tenderly green that the foliage of the elm and the hawthorn would show dully at their side ; others of a deeper tint, and lined, as it were, with a rich and changeful purple. Don't you see them ?' pursued my dear young friend, who is a delightful piece of life and sunshine, and was half inclined to scold me for the calmness with which, amused by her enthusiasm, I stood listening to her ardent exclamations — 'Don't you see them ? Oh how beautiful ! and in what quantity ! what profusion ! See how the dark shade of the holly sets off the light and delicate colouring of the flower ! And see that other bed of them springing from the rich moss in the roots of that old beech tree ! Pray let us gather some. Here are baskets.' So quickly and carefully we began gathering—leaves, blossoms, roots and all, for the plant is so fragile that it will not brook separation ; quickly and carefully we gathered, encountering divers petty misfortunes in spite of all our care,—now caught by the veil in a holly bush, now hitching our shawls in a bramble ; still gathering on, in spite of scratched fingers, till we had nearly filled our baskets and began to talk of our departure.

‘But where is May? May! May! No going home without her. May! Here she comes galloping, the beauty!’—(Ellen is almost as fond of May as I am.)—‘What has she got in her mouth? that rough, round, brown substance which she touches so tenderly? What can it be? A bird’s nest? Naughty May!’

‘No! as I live, a hedgehog! Look, Ellen, how it has coiled itself into a thorny ball! Off with it, May! Don’t bring it to me!’ And May, somewhat reluctant to part with her prickly prize, however troublesome of carriage, whose change of shape seemed to me to have puzzled her sagacity more than any event I ever witnessed, for in general she has perfectly the air of understanding all that is going forward,—May at last dropped the hedgehog, continuing, however, to pat it with her delicate cat-like paw, cautiously and daintily applied, and caught back suddenly and rapidly after every touch, as if her poor captive had been a red-hot coal. Finding that these pats entirely failed in solving the riddle (for the hedgehog shammed dead, like the lamb the other day, and appeared entirely motionless), she gave him so spirited a nudge with her pretty black nose, that she not only turned him over, but sent him rolling some little way along the turfy path,—an operation which that sagacious quadruped endured with the most perfect passiveness, the most admirable non-resistance. No wonder that May’s discernment was at fault; I myself, if I had not been aware of the trick, should have said that the ugly rough thing which she was trundling along, like a bowl or a cricket-ball, was an inanimate substance, something devoid of sensation and of will. At last my poor pet, thoroughly perplexed and tired out, fairly relinquished the contest, and came slowly away, turning back once or

twice to look at the object of her curiosity, as if half inclined to return and try the event of another shove. The sudden flight of a wood-pigeon effectually diverted her attention; and Ellen amused herself by fancying how the hedgehog was scuttling away, till our notice was also attracted by a very different object.

We had nearly threaded the wood, and were approaching an open grove of magnificent oaks on the other side, when sounds other than of nightingales burst on our ear, the deep and frequent strokes of the woodman's axe; and emerging from the Pinge we discovered the havoc which that axe had committed. Above twenty of the finest trees lay stretched on the velvet turf. There they lay in every shape and form of devastation: some, bare trunks, stripped ready for the timber carriage, with the bark built up in long piles at the side; some with the spoilers busy about them, stripping, hacking, hewing; others with their noble branches, their brown and fragrant shoots, all fresh as if they were alive,—majestic corpses, the slain of to-day! The grove was like a field of battle. The young lads who were stripping the bark, the very children who were picking up the chips, seemed awed and silent, as if conscious that death was around them. The nightingales sang faintly and interruptedly—a few low frightened notes like a requiem.

Ah! here we are at the very scene of murder, the very tree that they are felling; they have just hewn round the trunk with those slaughtering axes, and are about to saw it asunder. After all, it is a fine and thrilling operation, as the work of death usually is. Into how grand an attitude was that young man thrown as he gave the final strokes round the root! and how wonderful is the effect of that supple and apparently powerless saw, bending like a riband, and

yet overmastering that giant of the woods, conquering and overthrowing that thing of life ! Now it has passed half through the trunk, and the woodman has begun to calculate which way the tree will fall ; he drives a wedge to direct its course ; now a few more movements of the noiseless saw, and then a larger wedge. See how the branches tremble ! Hark how the trunk begins to crack ! Another stroke of the huge hammer on the wedge, and the tree quivers as with a mortal agony, shakes, reels, and falls. How slow, and solemn, and awful it is ! How like to death, to human death in its grandest form ! Cæsar in the Capitol, Seneca in the bath, could not fall more sublimely than that oak.

Even the heavens seem to sympathize with the devastation. The clouds have gathered into one thick low canopy, dark and vapoury as the smoke which overhangs London ; the setting sun is just gleaming underneath with a dim and bloody glare, and the crimson rays spreading upward with a lurid and portentous grandeur, a subdued and dusky glow, like the light reflected on the sky from some vast conflagration. The deep flush fades away, and the rain begins to descend ; and we hurry homeward rapidly, yet sadly, forgetful alike of the flowers, the hedgehog, and the wetting, thinking and talking only of the fallen tree.





THE DELL.

MAY 2ND.—A delicious evening,—bright sunshine ; light summer air ; a sky almost cloudless ; and a fresh yet delicate verdure on the hedges and in the fields,—an evening that seems made for a visit to my newly-discovered haunt, the mossy dell, one of the most beautiful spots in the neighbourhood, which, after passing times out of number the field which it terminates, we found out about two months ago, from the accident of May's killing a rabbit there. May has had a fancy for the place ever since ; and so have I.

Thither accordingly we bent our way,—through the village—up the hill—along the common—past the avenue—across the bridge—and by the hill. How deserted the road is to-night ! We have not seen a single acquaintance, except poor blind Robert, laden with his sack of grass plucked from the hedges, and the little boy that leads him. A singular division of labour ! Little Jem guides Robert to the spots where the long grass grows, and tells him where it is most plentiful ; and then the old man cuts it close to the roots, and between them they fill the sack, and sell the contents in the village. Half the cows in the street—for our baker, our wheelwright, and our shoe-

maker has each his Alderney—owe the best part of their maintenance to blind Robert's industry.

Here we are at the entrance of the corn-field which leads to the dell, and which commands so fine a view of the Loddon, the mill, the great farm, with its picturesque out-buildings, and the range of woody hills beyond. It is impossible not to pause a moment at that gate, the landscape, always beautiful, is so suited to the season and the hour,—so bright, and gay, and spring-like! But May, who has the chance of another rabbit in her pretty head, has galloped forward to the dingle; and poor May, who follows me so faithfully in all my wanderings, has a right to a little indulgence in hers. So to the dingle we go.

At the end of the field, which when seen from the road seems terminated by a thick dark coppice, we come suddenly to the edge of a ravine, on one side fringed with a low growth of alder, birch, and willow, on the other, mossy, turfy, and bare, or only broken by bright tufts of blossomed broom. One or two old pollards almost conceal the winding road that leads down the descent, by the side of which a spring as bright as crystal runs gurgling along. The dell itself is an irregular piece of broken ground, in some parts very deep, intersected by two or three high banks of equal irregularity,—now abrupt, and bare, and rock-like, now crowned with tufts of the feathery willow or magnificent old thorns. Everywhere the earth is covered by short, fine turf, mixed with mosses, soft, beautiful, and various, and embossed with the speckled leaves and lilac flowers of the arum, the paler blossoms of the common orchis, the enamelled blue of the wild hyacinth, so splendid in this evening light, and large tufts of oxlips and cowslips rising like nosebags from the short turf.

The ground on the other side of the dell is much lower than the field through which we came, so that it is mainly to the labyrinthine intricacy of these high banks that it owes its singular character of wildness and variety. Now we seem hemmed in by those green cliffs, shut out from all the world, with nothing visible but those verdant mounds and the deep blue sky; now by some sudden turn we get a peep at an adjoining meadow, where the sheep are lying, dappling its sloping surface like the small clouds on the summer heaven. Poor harmless quiet creatures, how still they are!—some socially lying side by side; some grouped in threes and fours; some quite apart. Ah! there are lambs amongst them,—pretty, pretty lambs,—nestled in by their mothers. Soft, quiet, sleepy things! Not all so quiet, though! There is a party of these young lambs as wide-awake as heart can desire,—half a dozen of them playing together, frisking, dancing, leaping, butting, and crying in the young voice, which is so pretty a diminutive of the full-grown bleat. How beautiful they are with their innocent spotted faces, their mottled feet, their long curly tails, and their light flexible forms, frolicking like so many kittens, but with a gentleness, an assurance of sweetness and innocence, which no kitten, nothing that ever is to be a cat, can have. How complete and perfect is their enjoyment of existence! Ah! little rogues! your play has been too noisy; you have awakened your mammas; and two or three of the old ewes are getting up; and one of them, marching gravely to the troop of lambs, has selected her own, given her a gentle butt, and trotted off, the poor rebuked lamb following meekly, but every now and then stopping and casting a longing look at its play-mates, who, after a moment's awed pause, had

resumed their gambols ; whilst the stately dame every now and then looked back in her turn to see that her little one was following. At last she lay down, and the lamb by her side. I never saw so pretty a pastoral scene in my life.

Another turning of the dell gives a glimpse of the dark coppice by which it is backed, and from which we are separated by some marshy, rushy ground, where the springs have formed into a pool, and where the moor-hen loves to build her nest. Ay, there is one scudding away now ; I can hear her plash into the water, and the rustling of her wings amongst the rushes. This is the deepest part of the wild dingle. How uneven the ground is ! Surely these excavations, now so thoroughly clothed with vegetation, must originally have been huge gravel pits ; there is no other way of accounting for the labyrinth, for they do dig gravel in such capricious meanders ; but the quantity seems incredible. Well, there is no end of guessing ! We are getting amongst the springs, and must turn back. Round this corner, where on ledges like fairy terraces the orchises and arums grow, and we emerge suddenly on a new side of the dell, just fronting the small homestead of our good neighbour, Farmer Allen.

This rustic dwelling belongs to what used to be called in this part of the country 'a little bargain,'—thirty or forty acres, perhaps, of arable land, which the owner and his sons cultivated themselves, whilst the wife and daughters assisted in the husbandry, and eked out the slender earnings by the produce of the dairy, the poultry-yard, and the orchard,—an order of cultivators now passing rapidly away, but in which much of the best part of the English character, its industry, its frugality, its sound sense, and its kind-

ness, might be found. Farmer Allen himself is an excellent specimen, the cheerful, venerable old man, with his long white hair and his bright grey eye ; and his wife is a still finer. They have had a hard struggle to win through the world and keep their little property undivided ; but good management and good principles, and the assistance afforded them by an admirable son, who left our village a poor 'prentice boy, and is now a partner in a great house in London, have enabled them to overcome all the difficulties of these trying times, and they are now enjoying the peaceful evenings of a well-spent life as free from care and anxiety as their best friends could desire.

Ah ! there is Mr. Allen in the orchard, the beautiful orchard, with its glorious gardens of pink and white, its pearly pear-blossoms and coral apple-buds. What a flush of bloom it is ! How brightly delicate it appears, thrown into strong relief by the dark house and the weather-stained barn, in this soft evening light ! The very grass is strewn with the snowy petals of the pear and the cherry. And there sits Mrs. Allen, feeding her poultry, with her three little grand-daughters from London—pretty fairies from three years old to five (only two and twenty months elapsed between the birth of the eldest and the youngest)—playing round her feet.

Mrs. Allen, my dear Mrs. Allen, has been that rare thing a beauty, and although she be now an old woman, I had almost said that she is so still. Why should I not say so ? Nobleness of feature and sweetness of expression are surely as delightful in age as in youth. Her face and figure are much like those which are stamped indelibly on the memory of every one who ever saw that grand specimen of woman, Mrs. Siddons. The outline of Mrs. Allen's face is

exactly the same ; but there is more softness, more gentleness, a more feminine composure in the eye and in the smile. Mrs. Allen never played Lady Macbeth. Her hair, almost as black as at twenty, is parted on her large fair forehead, and combed under her exquisitely neat and snowy cap ; a muslin neckerchief, a grey stuff gown, and a white apron complete the picture.

There she sits under an old elder tree, which flings its branches over her like a canopy, whilst the setting sun illumines her venerable figure, and touches the leaves with an emerald light ;—there she sits, placid and smiling, with her spectacles in her hand and a measure of barley on her lap, into which the little girls are dipping their chubby hands and scattering the corn amongst the ducks and chickens with unspeakable glee. But those ingrates the poultry don't seem so pleased and thankful as they ought to be,—they mistrust their young feeders. All domestic animals dislike children, partly from an instinctive fear of their tricks and their thoughtlessness ; partly, I suspect, from jealousy. Jealousy seems a strange tragic passion to attribute to the inmates of the *basse-cour* ; but only look at that strutting fellow of a bantam cock (evidently a favourite), who sidles up to his old mistress with an air half affronted and half tender, turning so scornfully from the barley-corns which Annie is flinging towards him, and say if he be not as jealous as Othello ? Nothing can pacify him but Mrs. Allen's notice and a dole from her hand. See, she is calling to him and feeding him, and now how he swells out his feathers, and flutters his wings, and erects his glossy neck, and struts and crows and pecks, proudest and happiest of bantams, the pet and glory of the poultry-yard !

In the meantime, my own pet May, who has all this while been peeping into every hole, and penetrating every nook and winding of the dell, in hopes to find another rabbit, has returned to my side, and is sliding her snake-like head into my hand, at once to invite the caress which she likes so well, and to intimate, with all due respect, that it is time to go home. The setting sun gives the same warning; and in a moment we are through the dell, the field, and the gate, past the farm and the mill, and hanging over the bridge that crosses the Loddon river.

What a sunset! how golden! how beautiful! The sun just disappearing, and the narrow liny clouds, which a few minutes ago lay like soft vapoury streaks along the horizon, lighted up with a golden splendour that the eye can scarcely endure, and those still softer clouds which floated above them wreathing and curling into a thousand fantastic forms, as thin and changeful as summer smoke, now defined and deepened into grandeur, and edged with ineffable, insufferable light! Another minute and the brilliant orb totally disappears, and the sky above grows every moment more varied and more beautiful, as the dazzling golden lines are mixed with glowing red and gorgeous purple, dappled with small dark specks, and mingled with such a blue as the egg of the hedge-sparrow. To look up at that glorious sky, and then to see that magnificent picture reflected in the clear and lovely Loddon water, is a pleasure never to be described and never forgotten. My heart swells and my eyes fill as I write of it, and think of the immeasurable majesty of nature, and the unspeakable goodness of God, who has spread an enjoyment so pure, so peaceful, and so intense before the meanest and the lowliest of His creatures.



THE HARD SUMMER.

AUGUST 15TH.—Cold, cloudy, windy, wet. Here we are, in the midst of the dog-days, clustering merrily round the warm hearth like so many crickets, instead of chirruping in the green fields like that other merry insect the grasshopper; shivering under the influence of the Jupiter Pluvius of England, the watery St. Swithin; peering at that scarce personage the sun, when he happens to make his appearance, as intently as astronomers look after a comet, or the common people stare at a balloon; exclaiming against the cold weather, just as we used to exclaim against the warm. 'What a change from last year!' is the first sentence you hear, go where you may. Everybody remarks it, and everybody complains of it; and yet in my mind it has its advantages, or at least its compensations, as everything in nature has, if we would only take the trouble to seek for them.

Last year, in spite of the love which we are now pleased to profess towards that ardent luminary, not one of the sun's numerous admirers had courage to look him in the face; there was no bearing the world till he had said 'good-night' to it. Then we might stir; then we began to wake and to live. All day long we languished under his influence in a strange dreaminess, too hot to work, too hot to read, too hot

to write, too hot even to talk ; sitting hour after hour in a green arbour, embowered in leafiness, letting thought and fancy float as they would. Those day-dreams were pretty things in their way, there is no denying that. But then, if one half of the world were to dream through a whole summer, like the Sleeping Beauty in the wood, what would become of the other?

The only office requiring the slightest exertion which I performed in that warm weather, was watering my flowers. Common sympathy called for that labour. The poor things withered, and faded, and pined away; they almost, so to say, panted for drought. Moreover, if I had not watered them myself, I suspect that no one else would ; for water last year was nearly as precious hereabout as wine. Our land-springs were dried up ; our wells were exhausted ; our deep ponds were dwindling into mud ; and geese, and ducks, and pigs, and laundresses, used to look with a jealous and suspicious eye on the few and scanty half-buckets of that impure element which my trusty lacquey was fain to filch for my poor geraniums and campanulas and tuberoses. We were forced to smuggle them in through my faithful adherent's territories, the stable, to avoid lectures within doors ; and at last even that resource failed : my garden, my blooming garden, the joy of my eyes, was forced to go waterless like its neighbours, and became shrivelled, scorched, and sunburnt, like them. It really went to my heart to look at it.

On the other side of the house matters were still worse. What a dusty world it was, when about sunset we became cool enough to creep into it ! Flowers in the court looking fit for a *hortus siccus*,—mummies of plants, dried as in an oven ; hollyhocks, once pink, turned into Quakers ; cloves smelling of dust. Oh,

dusty world ! May herself looked of that complexion ; so did Lizzy ; so did all the houses, windows, chickens, children, trees, and pigs in the village ; so, above all, did the shoes. No foot could make three plunges into that abyss of pulverized gravel, which had the impudence to call itself a hard road, without being clothed with a coat a quarter of an inch thick. Woe to white gowns ! woe to black ! Drab was your only wear.

Then, when we were out of the street, what a toil it was to mount the hill, climbing with weary steps and slow upon the brown turf by the way-side, slippery, hot, and hard as a rock ! And then, if we happened to meet a carriage coming along the middle of the road,—the bottomless middle,—what a sandy whirlwind it was ! What choking ! what suffocation ! No state could be more pitiable, except indeed that of the travellers who carried this misery about with them. I shall never forget the plight in which we met the coach one evening in last August, full an hour after its time, steeds and driver, carriage and passengers, all one dust. The outsides, and the horses, and the coachman seemed reduced to a torpid quietness, the resignation of despair. They had left off trying to better their condition, and taken refuge in a wise and patient hopelessness, bent to endure in silence the extremity of ill. The six insides, on the contrary, were still fighting against their fate, vainly struggling to ameliorate their hapless destiny. They were visibly grumbling at the weather, scolding at the dust, and heating themselves like a furnace by striving against the heat. How well I remember the fat gentleman without his coat, who was wiping his forehead, heaving up his wig, and certainly uttering that English ejaculation which, to

our national reproach, is the phrase of our language best known on the Continent. And that poor boy, red-hot, all in a flame, whose mamma, having divested her own person of all superfluous apparel, was trying to relieve his sufferings by the removal of his neckerchief—an operation which he resisted with all his might. How perfectly I remember him, as well as the pale girl who sat opposite, fanning herself with her bonnet into an absolute fever! They vanished after a while into their own dust; but I have them all before my eyes at this moment, a companion picture to Hogarth's 'Afternoon,' a standing lesson to the grumblers at cold summers.

For my part I really like this wet season. It keeps us within, to be sure, rather more than is quite agreeable; but then we are at least awake and alive there, and the world out of doors is so much the pleasanter when we can get abroad. Everything does well, except those fastidious bipeds, men and women: corn ripens, grass grows, fruit is plentiful; there is no lack of birds to eat it, and there has not been such a wasp-season these dozen years. My garden wants no watering, and is more beautiful than ever, beating my old rival in that primitive art, the pretty wife of the little mason, out and out. Measured with mine, her flowers are naught. Look at those hollyhocks, like pyramids of roses; those garlands of the convolvulus major of all colours, hanging around that tall pole, like the wreathy hop-bine; those magnificent dusky cloves, breathing of the Spice Islands; those flaunting double dahlias; those splendid scarlet geraniums, and those fierce and warlike flowers the tiger-lilies. Oh, how beautiful they are! Besides, the weather clears sometimes,—it has cleared this evening; and here are we, after a merry walk up the hill, almost as

quick as in the winter, bounding lightly along the bright green turf of the pleasant common, enticed by the gay shouts of a dozen clear young voices to linger awhile and see the boys play at cricket.

I plead guilty to a strong partiality towards that unpopular class of beings, country boys; I have a large acquaintance amongst them, and I can almost say that I know good of many and harm of none. In general they are an open, spirited, good-humoured race, with a proneness to embrace the pleasures and eschew the evils of their condition,—a capacity for happiness, quite unmatched in man, or woman, or a girl. They are patient, too, and bear their fate as scape-goats (for all sins whatsoever are laid as matters of course to their door), whether at home or abroad, with amazing resignation; and, considering the many lies of which they are the objects, they tell wonderfully few in return. The worst that can be said of them is, that they seldom, when grown to man's estate, keep the promise of their boyhood; but that is a fault to come,—a fault that may not come, and ought not to be anticipated. It is astonishing how sensible they are to notice from their betters, or those whom they think such. I do not speak of money, or gifts, or praise, or the more coarse and common briberies,—they are more delicate courtiers; a word, a nod, a smile, or the mere calling of them by their names, is enough to insure their hearts and their services. Half a dozen of them, poor urchins, have run away now to bring us chairs from their several homes. 'Thank you, Joe Kirby! You are always first. Yes, that is just the place; I shall see everything there. Have you been in yet, Joe?' 'No, ma'am; I go in next.' 'Ah, I am glad of that. And now's the time. Really that was a pretty ball of

SKETCHES

Sketches of the
Tribes
of the
North
American
Indians
of the
United States
by
J. W. Powell
and
G. H. R. Allen
with
illustrations
by
G. H. R. Allen
and
J. W. Powell
Published by
the
Bureau of
Ethnology
Washington, D. C.
1891

had a nest of nightingales in his throat, was but a type of Joe Kirby. There is a sort of ubiquity about him; he thinks nothing of being in two places at once, and for pitching a ball, William Grey himself is nothing to him. It goes straight to the mark like a bullet. He is king of the cricketers from eight to sixteen, both inclusive, and an excellent ruler he makes. Nevertheless in the best-ordered states there will be grumblers, and we have an opposition here in the shape of Jem Eusden.

Jem Eusden is a stunted lad of thirteen or there about, lean, small, and short, yet strong and active. His face is of an extraordinary ugliness, colourless, withered, haggard, with a look of extreme age, much increased by hair so light that it might rather pass for white than flaxen. He is constantly arrayed in the blue cap and old-fashioned coat, the costume of an endowed school to which he belongs; where he sits still all day, and rushes into the field at night, fresh, untired, and ripe for action, to scold and brawl, and storm and bluster. He hates Joe Kirby, whose immoveable good-humour, broad smiles, and knowing nods must certainly be very provoking to so fierce and turbulent a spirit; and he has himself (being, except by rare accident, no great player) the preposterous ambition of wishing to be manager of the sports. In short, he is a demagogue in embryo, with every quality necessary to a splendid success in that vocation,—a strong voice, a fluent utterance, an incessant iteration, and a frontless impudence. He is a great ‘scholar,’ too, to use the country phrase: his ‘piece,’ as our village schoolmaster terms a fine sheet of flourishing writing, something between a valentine and a sampler, enclosed within a border of little coloured prints,—his last, I remember, was encircled

home now? And shall we take the longest but prettiest road, that by the green lanes? This way, to the left, round the corner of the common, past Mr. Welles's cottage, and our path lies straight before us. How snug and comfortable that cottage looks! Its little yard all alive with the cow, and the mare, and the colt almost as large as the mare, and the young foal, and the great yard-dog, all so fat! Fenced in with hay-rick, and wheat-rick, and bean-stack, and backed by the long garden, the spacious drying-ground, the fine orchard, and that large field quartered into four different crops. How comfortable this cottage looks, and how well the owners earn their comforts! They are the most prosperous pair in the parish,—she a laundress with twenty times more work than she can do, unrivalled in flounces and shirt-frills, and such delicacies of the craft; he, partly a farmer, partly a farmer's man, tilling his own ground, and then tilling other people's,—affording a proof, even in this declining age, when the circumstances of so many worthy members of the community seem to have 'an alacrity in sinking,' that it is possible to amend them by sheer industry. He who was born in the workhouse, and bred up as a parish boy, has now, by mere manual labour, risen to the rank of a landowner, pays rates and taxes, grumbles at the times, and is called Master Welles,—the title next to Mister, that by which Shakspeare was called: what would man have more? His wife, besides being the best laundress in the county, is a comely woman still. There she stands at the spring, dipping up water for to-morrow,—the clear, deep, silent spring, which sleeps so peacefully under its high flowery bank, red with the tall spiral stalks of the foxglove and their rich pendent bells, blue with the beautiful forget-me-not, that gem-like

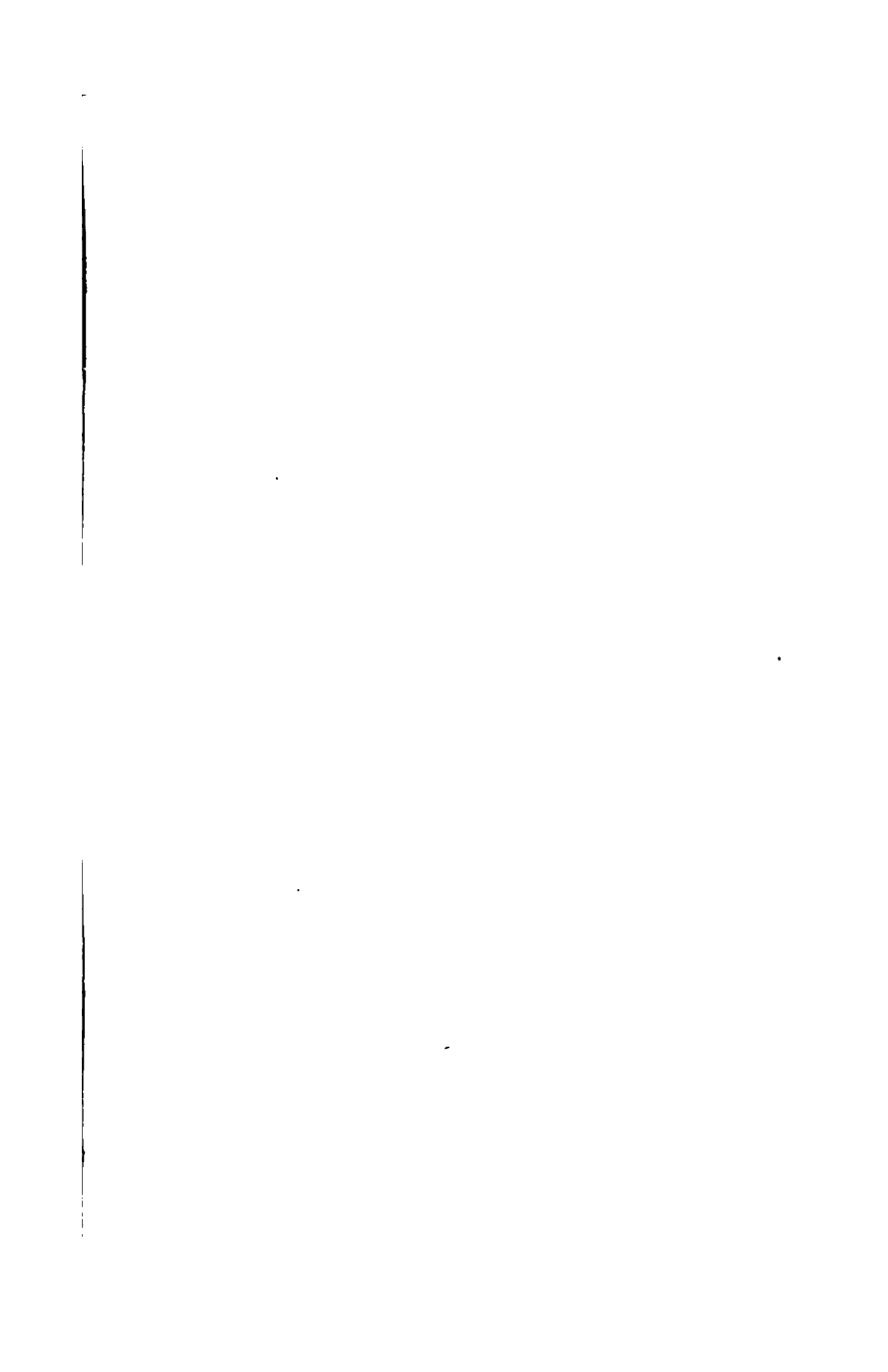
blossom, which looks like a living jewel of turquoise and topaz. It is almost too late to see its beauty. And here is the pleasant shady lane, where the high elms will shut out the little twilight that remains. Ah, but we shall have the fairies' lamps to guide us, the stars of the earth, the glow-worms! Here they are, three almost together. Do you not see them? One seems tremulous, vibrating, as if on the extremity of a leaf of grass; the others are deeper in the hedge, in some green cell, on which their light falls with an emerald lustre. I hope my friends the cricketers will not come this way home. I would not have the pretty creatures removed for more than I care to say, and in this matter I would hardly trust Joe Kirby,—boys so love to stick them in their hats. But this lane is quite deserted. It is only a road from field to field. No one comes here at this hour. They are quite safe; and I shall walk here to-morrow and visit them again. And now, good night! beautiful insects, lamps of the fairies, good night!

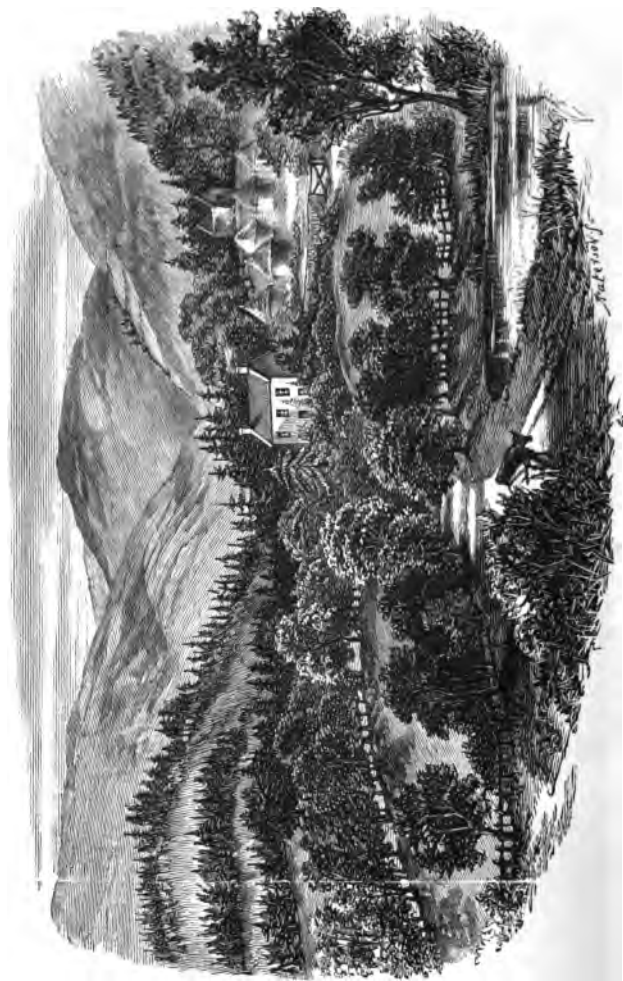




NUTTING

SEPTEMBER 26TH.—One of those delicious autumnal days when the air, the sky, and the earth seem lulled into a universal calm, softer and milder even than May. We sallied forth for a walk, in a mood congenial to the weather and the season, avoiding, by mutual consent, the bright and sunny common, and the gay high-road, and stealing through shady, unfrequented lanes, where we were not likely to meet any one, not even the pretty family procession which in other years we used to contemplate with so much interest,—the father, mother, and children returning from the wheat-field, the little ones laden with bristling, close-tied bunches of wheat-ears, their own gleanings, or a bottle and a basket which had contained their frugal dinner, whilst the mother would carry her babe, hushing and lulling it, and the father and an elder child trudged after with the cradle, all seeming weary and all happy. We shall not see such a procession as this to-day; for the harvest is nearly over, the fields are deserted, the silence may almost be felt. Except the wintry notes of the redbreast, Nature herself is mute. But how beautiful, how gentle, how harmonious, how rich! The rain has preserved to the herbage all the freshness and verdure of spring,





Farmhouse on the Hillside. — VILLAGE TALES AND SKETCHES, *Page 183.*

and the world of leaves has lost nothing of its mid-summer brightness, and the harebell is on the banks, and the woodbine in the hedges, and the low furze, which the lambs cropped in the spring, has burst again into its golden blossoms.

All is beautiful that the eye can see,—perhaps the more beautiful for being shut in with a forest-like closeness. We have no prospect in this labyrinth of lanes, cross-roads, mere cart-ways, leading to the innumerable little farms into which this part of the parish is divided. Up-hill or down, these quiet woody lanes scarcely give us a peep at the world, except when, leaning over a gate, we look into one of the small enclosures, hemmed in with hedgerows, so closely set with growing timber that the meady opening looks almost like a glade in a wood; or when some cottage, planted at a corner of one of the little greens formed by the meeting of these cross-ways, almost startles us by the unexpected sight of the dwellings of men in such a solitude. But that we have more of hill and dale, and that our cross-roads are excellent in their kind, this side of our parish would resemble the description given of La Vendée, in Madame Laroche-Jacquelin's most interesting book. I am sure if wood can entitle a country to be called *Le Bocage*, none can have a better right to the name. Even this pretty snug farm-house on the hill-side, with its front covered with the rich vine, which goes wreathing up to the very top of the clustered chimney, and its sloping orchard full of fruit,—even this pretty quiet nest can hardly peep out of its leaves. Ah! they are gathering in the orchard harvest. Look at that young rogue in the old mossy apple tree,—that great tree, bending with the weight of its golden rennets; see how he pelts his little sister

beneath with apples as red and as round as her own cheeks, while she, with her outstretched frock, is trying to catch them, and laughing and offering to pelt again as often as one bobs against her ; and look at that still younger imp, who, as grave as a judge, is creeping on hands and knees under the tree, picking up the apples as they fall so deedily,¹ and depositing them so honestly in the great basket on the grass, already fixed so firmly and opened so widely, and filled almost to overflowing by the brown rough fruitage of the golden rennet's next neighbour the russeting ; and see that smallest urchin of all, seated apart in infantine state on the turfy bank, with that toothsome piece of deformity a crumpling in each hand, now biting from one sweet, hard, juicy morsel, and now from another. Is not that a pretty English picture ? And then, farther up the orchard, that bold, hardy lad, the eldest born, who has scaled (Heaven knows how !) the tall, straight upper branch of that great pear tree, and is sitting there as securely and as fearlessly, in as much real safety and apparent danger, as a sailor on the top-mast. Now he shakes the tree with a mighty swing that brings down a pelting shower of stony bergamots, which the father gathers rapidly up, whilst the mother can hardly assist for her motherly fear,—a fear which only spurs the spirited boy to bolder ventures. Is not that a pretty picture ? And they are such a handsome family too, the Brookers. I do not know that there

¹ 'Deedily.'—I am not quite sure that this word is good English ; but it is genuine Hampshire, and is used by the most correct of female writers, Miss Austen. It means (and it is no small merit that it has no exact synonym) anything done with a profound and plodding attention, an action which engrosses all the powers of mind and body.

is any gipsy blood, but there is the true gipsy complexion, richly brown, with cheeks and lips so red, black hair curling close to their heads in short crisp rings, white shining teeth, and such eyes! That sort of beauty entirely eclipses your mere roses and lilies. Even Lizzy, the prettiest of fair children, would look poor and watery by the side of Willy Brooker, the sober little personage who is picking up the apples with his small chubby hands, and filling the basket so orderly, next to his father the most useful man in the field. 'Willy!' He hears without seeing; for we are quite hidden by the high bank, and a spreading hawthorn bush that overtops it, though between the lower branches and the grass we have found a convenient peep-hole. 'Willy!' The voice sounds to him like some fairy dream, and the black eyes are raised from the ground with sudden wonder, the long silky eyelashes thrown back till they rest on the delicate brow, and a deeper blush is burning on those dark cheeks, and a smile is dimpling about those scarlet lips. But the voice is silent now, and the little quiet boy, after a moment's pause, is gone coolly to work again. He is indeed a most lovely child. I think some day or other he must marry Lizzy; I shall propose the match to their respective mammas. At present the parties are rather too young for a wedding,—the intended bridegroom being, as I should judge, six or thereabout, and the fair bride barely five; but at least we might have a betrothment after the royal fashion,—there could be no harm in that. Miss Lizzy, I have no doubt, would be as demure and coquettish as if ten winters more had gone over her head; and poor Willy would open his innocent black eyes, and wonder what was going forward. They would be the very Oberon

and Titania of the village, the fairy king and queen.

Ah ! here is the hedge along which the periwinkle wreathes and twines so profusely, with its evergreen leaves shining like the myrtle, and its starry blue flowers. It is seldom found wild in this part of England ; but when we do meet with it, it is so abundant and so welcome,—the very robin-redbreast of flowers, a winter friend. Unless in those unfrequent frosts which destroy all vegetation, it blossoms from September to June, surviving the last lingering crane's-bill, forerunning the earliest primrose, hardier even than the mountain daisy,—peeping out from beneath the snow, looking at itself in the ice, smiling through the tempests of life, and yet welcoming and enjoying the sunbeams. Oh, to be like that flower !

The little spring that has been bubbling under the hedge all along the hill-side begins, now that we have mounted the eminence and are imperceptibly descending, to deviate into a capricious variety of clear deep pools and channels, so narrow and so choked with weeds that a child might overstep them. The hedge has also changed its character. It is no longer the close, compact vegetable wall of hawthorn, and maple, and brier-roses, intertwined with bramble and woodbine, and crowned with large elms or thickly-set saplings. No ! the pretty meadow which rises high above us, backed and almost surrounded by a tall coppice, needs no defence on our side but its own steep bank, garnished with tufts of broom, with pollard oaks wreathed with ivy, and here and there with long patches of hazel overhanging the water. ' Ah, there are still nuts on that bough ! ' and in an instant my dear companion, active and eager and delighted as a


boy, has hooked down with his walking-stick one of the lissome hazel stalks, and cleared it of its tawny clusters, and in another moment he has mounted the bank, and is in the midst of the nuttery, now transferring the spoil from the lower branches into that vast variety of pockets which gentlemen carry about them, now bending the tall tops into the lane, holding them down by main force, so that I might reach them and enjoy the pleasure of collecting some of the plunder myself. A very great pleasure he knew it would be. I doffed my shawl, tucked up my flounces, turned my straw bonnet into a basket, and began gathering and scrambling; for, manage it how you may, nutting is scrambling work,—those boughs, however tightly you may grasp them by the young fragrant twigs and the bright green leaves, will recoil and burst away; but there is a pleasure even in that; so on we go, scrambling and gathering with all our might and all our glee. Oh, what an enjoyment! All my life long I have had a passion for that sort of seeking which implies finding (the secret, I believe, of the love of field-sports, which is in man's mind a natural impulse); therefore I love violeting; therefore, when we had a fine garden, I used to love to gather strawberries, and cut asparagus, and, above all, to collect the filberts from the shrubberies; but this hedgerow nutting beats that sport all to nothing. That was a make-believe thing compared with this. There was no surprise, no suspense, no unexpectedness: it was as inferior to this wild nutting, as the turning out of a bag-fox is to unearthing the fellow in the eyes of a staunch fox-hunter.

Oh, what enjoyment this nut-gathering is! They are in such abundance, that it seems as if there were not a boy in the parish, nor a young man, nor a young

woman ; for a basket of nuts is the universal tribute of country gallantry ; our pretty damsel Harriet has had at least half-a-dozen this season ; but no one has found out these. And they are so full too, we lose half of them from over-ripeness ; they drop from the socket at the slightest motion. If we lose, there is one who finds. May is as fond of nuts as a squirrel, and cracks the shell and extracts the kernel with equal dexterity. Her white glossy head is upturned now to watch them as they fall. See how her neck is thrown back like that of a swan, and how beautifully her folded ears quiver with expectation, and how her quick eye follows the rustling noise, and her light feet dance and pat the ground, and leap up with eagerness, seeming almost sustained in the air, just as I have seen her when Brush is beating a hedgerow, and she knows from his questing that there is a hare afoot. See, she has caught that nut just before it touched the water ; but the water would have been no defence, —she fishes them from the bottom, she delves after them amongst the matted grass ; even my bonnet, how beggingly she looks at that ! ‘Oh, what a pleasure nutting is ! Is it not, May ? But the pockets are almost full, and so is the basket-bonnet ; and that bright watch the sun says it is late ; and, after all, it is wrong to rob the poor boys—is it not, May ?’ May shakes her graceful head denyingly, as if she understood the question. ‘And we must go home now—must we not ? But we will come nutting again some time or other—shall we not, my May ?’



THE VISIT.

CTOBER 27TH.—A lovely autumnal day ; the air soft, balmy, genial ; the sky of that softened and delicate blue upon which the eye loves to rest,—the blue which gives such relief to the rich beauty of the earth, all around glowing in the ripe and mellow tints of the most gorgeous of the seasons. Really such an autumn may well compensate our English climate for the fine spring of the south, that spring of which the poets talk, but which we so seldom enjoy. Such an autumn glows upon us like a splendid evening,—it is the very sunset of the year ; and I have been tempted forth into a wider range of enjoyment than usual. This *walk* (if I may use the Irish figure of speech called a *bull*) will be a *ride*. A very dear friend has beguiled me into accompanying her in her pretty equipage to her beautiful home, four miles off ; and, having sent forward in the style of a running footman the servant who had driven her, she assumes the reins, and off we set.

My fair companion is a person whom nature and fortune would have spoiled if they could. She is one of those striking women whom a stranger cannot pass without turning to look again,—tall and finely proportioned, with a bold Roman contour of figure and

feature, a delicate English complexion, and an air of distinction altogether her own. Her beauty is duchess-like. She seems born to wear feathers and diamonds, and to form the grace and ornament of a court; and the noble frankness and simplicity of her countenance and manner confirm the impression. Destiny has, however, dealt more kindly by her. She is the wife of a rich country gentleman of high descent and higher attainments, to whom she is most devotedly attached; the mother of a little girl as lovely as herself, and the delight of all who have the happiness of her acquaintance, to whom she is endeared not merely by her remarkable sweetness of temper and kindness of heart, but by the singular ingenuousness and openness of character which communicate an indescribable charm to her conversation. She is as transparent as water. You may see every colour, every shade, of a mind as lofty and beautiful as her person. Talking with her is like being in the Palace of Truth described by Madame De Genlis; and yet so kindly are her feelings, so great her indulgence to the little failings and foibles of our common nature, so intense her sympathy with the wants, the wishes, the sorrows, and the happiness of her fellow-creatures, that, with all her frank-speaking, I never knew her make an enemy or lose a friend.

But we must get on. What would she say if she knew I was putting her into print? We must get on up the hill. Ah! that is precisely what we are not likely to do! This horse, this beautiful and high-bred horse, well fed, and fat and glossy, who stood prancing at our gate like an Arabian, has suddenly turned sulky. He does not indeed stand quite still, but his way of moving is little better,—the slowest and most sullen of all walks. Even they who ply the

hearse at funerals, sad-looking beasts who totter under black feathers, go faster. It is of no use to admonish him by whip, or rein, or word. The rogue has found out that it is a weak and tender hand that guides him now. Oh, for one pull, one stroke of his old driver, the groom! how he would fly! But there is the groom half-a-mile before us, out of earshot, clearing the ground at a capital rate, beating us hollow. He has just turned the top of the hill, and in a moment—ay, *now*—he is out of sight, and will undoubtedly so continue till he meets us at the lawn gate. Well, there is no great harm. It is only prolonging the pleasure of enjoying together this charming scenery in this fine weather. If once we make up our minds not to care how slowly our steed goes, not to fret ourselves by vain exertions, it is no matter what his pace may be. There is little doubt of his getting home by sunset, and that will content us. He is, after all, a fine, noble animal; and perhaps, when he finds that we are determined to give him his way, he may relent and give us ours. All his sex are sticklers for dominion, though, when it is undisputed, some of them are generous enough to abandon it. Two or three of the most discreet wives of my acquaintance contrive to manage their husbands sufficiently with no better secret than this seeming submission; and in our case the example has the more weight, since we have no possible way of helping ourselves.

Thus philosophizing, we reach the top of the hill, and viewed with 'reverted eyes' the beautiful prospect that lay bathed in golden sunshine behind us. Cowper says, with that boldness of expressing in poetry the commonest and simplest feelings, which is perhaps one great secret of his originality,—

**'Scenes must be beautiful, which, daily seen,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.'**

Every day I walk up this hill,—every day I pause at the top to admire the broad winding road with the green waste on each side, uniting it with the thickly timbered hedgerows; the two pretty cottages at unequal distances, placed so as to mark the bends; the village beyond, with its mass of roofs and clustered chimneys peeping through the trees; and the rich distance, where cottages, mansions, churches, towns, seem embowered in some wide forest, and shut in by blue shadowy hills. Every day I admire this most beautiful landscape, yet never did it seem to me so fine or so glowing as now. All the tints of the glorious autumn,—orange, tawny, yellow, red,—are poured in profusion among the bright greens of the meadows and turnip-fields, till the eyes are satiated with colour; and then before us we have the common, with its picturesque roughness of surface tufted with cottages, dappled with water, edging off on one side into fields and farms and orchards, and terminated on the other by the princely oak avenue. What a richness and variety the wild broken ground gives to the luxuriant cultivation of the rest of the landscape! Cowper has described it for me. How perpetually, as we walk in the country, his vivid pictures recur to the memory! Here is his common and mine:—

'The common overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deform'd
And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
And decks itself with ornaments of gold.

Smells fresh, and, rich in odoriferous herbs
And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
With luxury of unexpected sweets.'

The description is exact. There, too, to the left is my cricket-ground (Cowper's common wanted that finishing grace) ; and there stands one solitary urchin, as if in contemplation of its past and future glories ; for, alas ! cricket is over for the season. Ah ! it is Ben Kirby, next brother to Joe, king of the youngsters, and probably his successor ; for this Michaelmas has cost us Joe. He is promoted from the farm to the mansion-house, two miles off ; there he cleans shoes, rubs knives, and runs on errands, and is, as his mother expresses it, 'a sort of 'prentice to the footman.' I should not wonder if Joe, some day or other, should overtop the footman, and rise to be butler ; and his splendid prospects must be our consolation for the loss of this great favourite. In the meantime we have Ben.

Ben Kirby is a year younger than Joe, and the schoolfellow and rival of Jem Eusden. To be sure his abilities lie in rather a different line : Jem is a scholar, Ben is a wag ; Jem is great in figures and writing, Ben in faces and mischief. His master says of him, that if there were two such in the school he must resign his office ; and, as far as my observation goes, the worthy pedagogue is right. Ben is, it must be confessed, a great corrupter of gravity. He hath an exceeding aversion to authority and decorum, and a wonderful boldness and dexterity in overthrowing the one and puzzling the other. His contortions of visage are astounding. His 'power over his own muscles and those of other people' is almost equal to that of Liston ; and, indeed, the original face, flat and square and Chinese in its shape, of a fine tan complexion, with a snub nose, and a slit for a mouth, is nearly as comical as that matchless performer's. When, aided by Ben's singular mobility of feature, his knowing winks and grins and shrugs and nods, together

with a certain dry shrewdness, a habit of saying sharp things, and a marvellous gift of impudence, it forms as fine a specimen as possible of a humorous country boy, an oddity in embryo. Everybody likes Ben, except his butts (which may perhaps comprise half his acquaintance); and of them no one so thoroughly hates and dreads him as our parish schoolmaster, a most worthy King Log, whom Ben dumbfounds twenty times a day. He is a great ornament of the cricket-ground, has a real genius for the game, and displays it after a very original manner, under the disguise of awkwardness,—as the clown shows off his agility in a pantomime. Nothing comes amiss to him. By the by, he would have been the very lad for us in our present dilemma,—not a horse in England could master Ben Kirby. But we are too far from him now, and perhaps it is as well that we are so. I believe the rogue has a kindness for me, in remembrance of certain apples and nuts which my usual companion, who delights in his wit, is accustomed to dole out to him. But it is a Robin Goodfellow nevertheless, a perfect Puck, that loves nothing on earth so well as mischief. Perhaps the horse may be the safer conductor of the two.

The avenue is quite alive to-day. Old women are picking up twigs and acorns, and pigs of all sizes doing their utmost to spare them the latter part of the trouble; boys and girls groping for beech-nuts under yonder clump; and a group of younger elves collecting as many dead leaves as they can find to feed the bonfire which is smoking away so briskly amongst the trees,—a sort of rehearsal of the grand bonfire nine days hence, of the loyal conflagration of the arch-traitor Guy Vaux, which is annually solemnized in the avenue, accompanied with as much of squibbery and crackery as our boys can beg or borrow, not to say steal. Ben

Kirby is a great man on the 5th of November. All the savings of a month, the hoarded halfpence, the new farthings, the very luck-penny, go off *in fumo* on that night. For my part, I like this daylight mockery better. There is no gunpowder—odious gunpowder! no noise but the merry shouts of the small fry, so shrill and happy, and the cawing of the rooks, who are wheeling in large circles over head, and wondering what is going forward in their territory, seeming in their loud clamour to ask what that light smoke may mean that curls so prettily amongst their old oaks, towering as if to meet the clouds. There is something very intelligent in the ways of that black people the rooks, particularly in their wonder. I suppose it results from their numbers and their unity of purpose, a sort of collective and corporate wisdom. Yet geese congregate also; and geese never by any chance look wise. But then geese are a domestic fowl,—we have spoiled them; and rooks are free commoners of nature, who use the habitations we provide for them, tenant our groves and our avenues, but never dream of becoming our subjects.

What a labyrinth of a road this is! I do think there are four turnings in the short half-mile between the avenue and the mill. And what a pity, as my companion observes, not that our good and jolly miller, the very representative of the old English yeomanry, should be so rich, but that one consequence of his riches should be the pulling down of the prettiest old mill that ever looked at itself in the Loddon, with the picturesque, low-browed, irregular cottage, which stood, with its light-pointed roof, its clustered chimneys, and its ever-open door, looking like the real abode of comfort and hospitality, to build this huge, staring, frightful, red-brick mill, as ugly as a manufactory, and this great square house, ugly and red to

match, just behind. The old buildings always used to remind me of Wollett's beautiful engraving of a scene in the *Maid of the Mill*. It will be long before any artist will make a drawing of this. Only think of this redness in a picture! this boiled lobster of a house! Falstaff's description of Bardolph's nose would look pale in comparison.

Here is that monstrous machine of a tilted waggon, with its load of flour, and its four fat horses. I wonder whether our horse will have the decency to get out of the way. If he does not, I am sure we cannot make him; and that enormous ship upon wheels, that ark on dry land, would roll over us like the car of Juggernaut. Really—oh no! there is no danger now. I should have remembered that it is my friend Samuel Long who drives the mill-team. He will take care of us. 'Thank you, Samuel!' And Samuel has put us on our way, steered us safely past his waggon, escorted us over the bridge; and now, having seen us through our immediate difficulties, has parted from us with a very civil bow and good-humoured smile, as one who is always civil and good-humoured, but with a certain triumphant masterful look in his eyes, which I have noted in men, even the best of them, when a woman gets into straits by attempting manly employments. He has done us great good though, and may be allowed his little feeling of superiority. The parting salute he bestowed on our steed, in the shape of an astounding crack of his huge whip, has put that refractory animal on his mettle. On we go; past the glazier's pretty house, with its porch and its filbert walk; along the narrow lane bordered with elms, whose fallen leaves have made the road one yellow; past that little farm-house with the horse-chestnut trees before, glowing like oranges; past the whitewashed school on the other

side, gay with October roses ; past the park, and the lodge, and the mansion, where once dwelt the great Earl of Clarendon ; and now the rascal has begun to discover that Samuel Long and his whip are a mile off, and that his mistress is driving him, and he slackens his pace accordingly. Perhaps he feels the beauty of the road just here, and goes slowly to enjoy it. Very beautiful it certainly is. The park paling forms the boundary on one side, with fine clumps of oak, and deer in all attitudes ; the water, tufted with alders, flowing along on the other. Another turn, and the water winds away, succeeded by a low hedge, and a sweep of green meadows ; whilst the park and its palings are replaced by a steep bank, on which stands a small, quiet, village alehouse ; and higher up, embosomed in wood, is the little country church, with its sloping churchyard, and its low white steeple peeping out from amongst magnificent yew trees :—

‘ Huge trunks ! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwined fibres serpentine
Up-coiling, and invet’rately convolved. ’—WORDSWORTH.

No village church was ever more happily placed. It is the very image of the peace and humbleness inculcated within its walls.

Ah ! here is a higher hill rising before us, almost like a mountain. How grandly the view opens as we ascend over that wild bank, overgrown with fern, and heath, and gorse, and between those tall hollies, glowing with their coral berries ! What an expanse ! But we have little time to gaze at present ; for that piece of perversity, our horse, who has walked over so much level ground, has now, inspired, I presume, by a desire to revisit his stable, taken it into that unaccountable noddle of his to trot up this, the very

steepest hill in the county. Here we are on the top ; and in five minutes we have reached the lawn gate, and are in the very midst of that beautiful piece of art or nature (I do not know to which class it belongs), the pleasure-ground of F. Hill. Never was the 'prophetic eye of taste' exerted with more magical skill than in these plantations. Thirty years ago this place had no existence ; it was a mere undistinguished tract of field and meadow and common land ; now it is a mimic forest, delighting the eye with the finest combinations of trees and shrubs, the rarest effects of form and foliage, and bewildering the mind with its green glades, and impervious recesses, and apparently interminable extent. It is the triumph of landscape gardening, and never more beautiful than in this autumn sunset, lighting up the ruddy beech and the spotted sycamore, and gilding the shining fir-cones that hang so thickly amongst the dark pines. The robins are singing around us, as if they too felt the magic of the hour. How gracefully the road winds through the leafy labyrinth, leading imperceptibly to the more ornamented sweep. Here we are at the door, amidst geraniums, and carnations, and jasmines, still in flower. Ah ! here is a flower sweeter than all, a bird gayer than the robin, the little bird that chirps to the tune of 'Mamma ! mamma !' the bright-faced fairy, whose tiny feet come pattering along, making a merry music, mamma's own Frances ! And following her guidance, here we are in the dear round room time enough to catch the last rays of the sun, as they light the noble landscape which lies like a panorama around us, lingering longest on that long island of old thorns and stunted oaks, the oasis of B. Heath, and then vanishing in a succession of gorgeous clouds.

Oct. 28th.—Another soft and brilliant morning. But the pleasures of to-day must be written in shorthand. I have left myself no room for notes of admiration.

First we drove about the coppice,—an extensive wood of oak, and elm, and beech, chiefly the former, which adjoins the park paling of F. Hill, of which demesne, indeed, it forms one of the most delightful parts. The roads through the coppice are studiously wild, so that they have the appearance of mere cart-tracks; and the manner in which the ground is tumbled about—the steep declivities, the sunny slopes, the sudden swells and falls, now a close narrow valley, then a sharp ascent to an eminence commanding an immense extent of prospect—have a striking air of natural beauty, developed and heightened by the perfection of art. All this, indeed, was familiar to me; the colouring only was new. I had been there in early spring, when the fragrant palms were on the willow, and the yellow tassels on the hazel, and every twig was swelling with renewed life; and I had been there again and again in the green leafiness of mid-summer; but never as now, when the dark verdure of the fir plantations, hanging over the picturesque and unequal paling, partly covered with moss and ivy, contrasts so remarkably with the shining orange-leaves of the beech, already half fallen, the pale yellow of the scattering elm, the deeper and richer tints of the oak, and the glossy stems of the ‘lady of the woods,’ the delicate weeping birch. The underwood is no less picturesque. The red-spotted leaves and redder berries of the old thorns, the scarlet festoons of the bramble, the tall fern of every hue, seem to vie with the brilliant mosaic of the ground, now covered with dead leaves and strewn with fir-cones, now, where a little glade intervenes, gay with various

mosses and splendid *fungi*. How beautiful is this coppice to-day! especially where the little spring, as clear as crystal, comes bubbling out from the 'old fantastic' beech root, and trickles over the grass, bright and silent as the dew in a May morning. The wood-pigeons (who are just returned from their summer migration, and are cropping the ivy berries) add their low cooings, the very note of love, to the slight fluttering of the falling leaves in the quiet air, giving a voice to the sunshine and the beauty. This coppice is a place to live and die in. But we must go. And how fine is the ascent which leads us again into the world, past those cottages hidden as in a pit, and by that hanging orchard and that rough heathy bank! The scenery in this one spot has a wildness, an abruptness of rise and fall, rare in any part of England,—rare, above all, in this rich and lovely but monotonous county. It is Switzerland in miniature.

And now we cross the hill to pay a morning visit to the family at the great house,—another fine place, commanding another fine sweep of country. The park, studded with old trees, and sinking gently into a valley, rich in wood and water, is in the best style of ornamental landscape, though more according to the common routine of gentlemen's seats than the singularly original place which we have just left. There is, however, one distinctive beauty in the grounds of the great house,—the magnificent firs which shade the terraces and surround the sweep, giving out in summer odours really Sabæan, and now in this low autumn sun producing an effect almost magical, as the huge red trunks, garlanded with ivy, stand out from the deep shadows like an army of giants. Indoors—oh, I must not take my readers indoors, or we shall never get away!—indoors the sunshine is brighter still; for

there, in a lofty, lightsome room, sat a damsel fair and arch and *piquante*, one whom Titian or Velasquez should be born again to paint, leaning over an instrument¹ as sparkling and fanciful as herself, singing pretty French romances, and Scottish Jacobite songs, and all sorts of graceful and airy drolleries picked up I know not where,—an English improvisatrice! a gayer Annot Lyle! whilst her sister, of a higher order of beauty, and with an earnest kindness in her smile that deepens its power, lends to the piano, as her father to the violin, an expression, a sensibility, a spirit, an eloquence almost superhuman—almost divine! Oh, to hear these two instruments accompanying my dear companion (I forgot to say that she is a singer worthy to be so accompanied) in Haydn's exquisite canzonet, 'She never told her love,'—to hear her voice, with all its power, its sweetness, its gush of sound, so sustained and assisted by modulations that rivalled its intensity of expression,—to hear at once such poetry, such music, such execution, is a pleasure never to be forgotten, or mixed with meaner things! I seem to hear it still.

'As, in the bursting spring-time, o'er the eye
Of one who haunts the fields, fair visions creep
Beneath the closed lids (afore dull sleep
Dims the quick fancy), of sweet flowers that lie
On grassy banks, oxlip of orient dye,
And palest primrose and blue violet,
All in their fresh and dewy beauty set,
Pictured within the sense, and will not fly;
So in mine ear resounds and lives again
One mingled melody,—a voice, a pair
Of instruments most voice-like! Of the air
Rather than of the earth seems that high strain,—
A spirit's song, and worthy of the train
That soothed old Prospero with music rare.'

¹ The dital harp.



HANNAH BINT.

THE Shaw leading to Hannah Bint's habitation is, as I perhaps have said before, a very pretty mixture of wood and cop-pice; that is to say, a tract of thirty or forty acres covered with fine growing timber,—ash, and oak, and elm, very regularly planted, and interspersed here and there with large patches of underwood, hazel, maple, birch, holly, and hawthorn, woven into almost impenetrable thickets by long wreaths of the bramble, the briony, and the brier-rose, or by the pliant and twisting garlands of the wild honeysuckle. In other parts the Shaw is quite clear of its bosky undergrowth, and clothed only with large beds of feathery fern, or carpets of flowers, primroses, orchises, cowslips, ground-ivy, crane's-bill, cotton-grass, Solomon's seal, and forget-me-not, crowded together with a profusion and brilliancy of colour such as I have rarely seen equalled even in a garden. Here the wild hyacinth really enamels the ground with its fresh and lovely purple; there,

‘On aged roots, with bright green mosses clad,
Dwells the wood-sorrel, with its bright thin leaves,
Heart-shaped and triply folded, and its root
Creeping like beaded coral; whilst around
Flourish the copse's pride, anemones,
With rays like golden studs on ivory laid
Most delicate, but touch'd with purple clouds,—
Fit crown for April's fair but changeful brow.’

The variety is much greater than I have enumerated ; for the ground is so unequal,—now swelling in gentle ascents, now dimpling into dells and hollows, and the soil so different in different parts,—that the sylvan flora is unusually extensive and complete.

The season is, however, now too late for this floweriness ; and except the tufted woodbines, which have continued in bloom during the whole of this lovely autumn, and some lingering garlands of the purple wild vetch, wreathing round the thickets, and uniting with the ruddy leaves of the bramble, and the pale festoons of the briony, there is little to call one's attention from the grander beauties of the trees,—the sycamore, its broad leaves already spotted ; the oak, heavy with acorns ; and the delicate shining rind of the weeping birch, 'the lady of the woods,'—thrown out in strong relief from a background of holly and hawthorn, each studded with coral berries, and backed with old beeches, beginning to assume the rich tawny hue which makes them perhaps the most picturesque of autumnal trees, as the transparent freshness of their young foliage is undoubtedly the choicest ornament of the forest in spring.

A sudden turn round one of these magnificent beeches brings us to the boundary of the Shaw, and, leaning upon a rude gate, we look over an open space of about ten acres of ground, still more varied and broken than that which we have passed, and surrounded on all sides by thick woodland. As a piece of colour, nothing can well be finer. The ruddy glow of the heath-flower, contrasting, on the one hand, with the golden-blossomed furze, on the other, with a patch of buck-wheat, of which the bloom is not past, although the grain be ripening,—the beautiful buck-wheat, whose transparent leaves and stalks are

so brightly tinged with vermillion, while the delicate pink-white of the flower, a paler persicaria, has a feathery fall, at once so rich and so graceful, and a fresh and reviving odour, like that of birch trees in the dew of a May evening. The bank that surmounts this attempt at cultivation is crowned with the late fox-glove and the stately mullein; the pasture, of which so great a part of the waste consists, looks as green as an emerald; a clear pond, with the bright sky reflected in it, lets light into the picture; the white cottage of the keeper peeps from the opposite coppice; and the vine-covered dwelling of Hannah Bint rises from amidst the pretty garden, which lies bathed in the sunshine around it.

The living and moving accessories are all in keeping with the cheerfulness and repose of the landscape: Hannah's cow grazing quietly beside the keeper's pony; a brace of fat pointer puppies holding amicable intercourse with a litter of young pigs; ducks, geese, cocks, hens, and chickens scattered over the turf; Hannah herself sallying forth from the cottage door, with her milk-bucket in her hand, and her little brother following with the milking-stool.

My friend Hannah Bint is by no means an ordinary person. Her father, Jack Bint (for in all his life he never arrived at the dignity of being called John,—indeed, in our parts he was commonly known by the cognomen of London Jack), was a drover of high repute in his profession. No man, between Salisbury Plain and Smithfield, was thought to conduct a flock of sheep so skilfully through all the difficulties of lanes and commons, streets and high-roads, as Jack Bint, aided by Jack Bint's famous dog Watch; for Watch's rough, honest face, black with a little white about the muzzle, and one white ear,

was as well known at fairs and markets as his master's equally honest and weatherbeaten visage. Lucky was the dealer that could secure their services,—Watch being renowned for keeping a flock together better than any shepherd's dog on the road, Jack for delivering them more punctually and in better condition. No man had a more thorough knowledge of the proper night stations, where good feed might be procured for his charge, and good liquor for Watch and himself,—Watch, like other sheep-dogs, being accustomed to live chiefly on bread and beer. His master, though not averse to a pot of good double X, preferred gin; and they who plod slowly along, through wet and weary ways, in frost and in fog, have undoubtedly a stronger temptation to indulge in that cordial and reviving stimulus than we water-drinkers, sitting in warm and comfortable rooms, can readily imagine. For certain our drover could never resist the gentle seduction of the gin-bottle; and, being of a free, merry, jovial temperament, one of those persons commonly called good fellows, who like to see others happy in the same way with themselves, he was apt to circulate it at his own expense, to the great improvement of his popularity, and the great detriment of his finances.

All this did vastly well whilst his earnings continued proportionate to his spendings, and the little family at home were comfortably supported by his industry; but when a rheumatic fever came on one hard winter, and finally settled in his limbs, reducing the most active and hardy man in the parish to the state of a confirmed cripple, then his reckless improvidence stared him in the face; and poor Jack, a thoughtless but kind creature, and a most affectionate father, looked at his three motherless children with the acute

misery of a parent, who has brought those whom he loves best in the world to abject destitution. He found help where he probably least expected it,—in the sense and spirit of his young daughter, a girl of twelve years old.

Hannah was the eldest of the family, and had ever since her mother's death, which event had occurred two or three years before, been accustomed to take the direction of their domestic concerns, to manage her two brothers, to feed the pigs and the poultry, and to keep house during the almost constant absence of her father. She was a quick, clever lass, of a high spirit, a firm temper, some pride, and a horror of accepting parochial relief, which is every day becoming rarer amongst the peasantry, but which forms the surest safeguard to the sturdy independence of the English character. Our little damsel possessed this quality in perfection; and when her father talked of giving up their comfortable cottage, and removing to the workhouse, whilst she and her brothers must go to service, Hannah formed a bold resolution, and, without disturbing the sick man by any participation of her hopes and fears, proceeded, after settling their trifling affairs, to act at once on her own plans and designs.

Careless of the future as the poor drover had seemed, he had yet kept clear of debt, and, by subscribing constantly to a benefit club, had secured a pittance that might at least assist in supporting him during the long years of sickness and helplessness to which he was doomed to look forward to. This his daughter knew. She knew also that the employer in whose service his health had suffered so severely was a rich and liberal cattle-dealer in the neighbourhood, who would willingly aid an old and faithful

servant, and had indeed come forward with offers of money. To assistance from such a quarter Hannah saw no objection. Farmer Oakley and the parish were quite distinct things. Of him accordingly she asked, not money, but something much more in his own way,—‘a cow! any cow! old or lame, or what not, so that it were a cow! she would be bound to keep it well; if she did not, he might take it back again. She even hoped to pay for it by and by, by instalments, but that she would not promise!’ and, partly amused, partly interested by the child’s earnestness, the wealthy yeoman gave her, not as a purchase, but as a present, a very fine young Alderney. She then went to the lord of the manor, and, with equal knowledge of character, begged his permission to keep her cow on the Shaw common. ‘Farmer Oakley had given her a fine Alderney, and she would be bound to pay the rent, and keep her father off the parish, if he would only let it graze on the waste;’ and he, too, half from real good-nature, half not to be outdone in liberality by his tenant, not only granted the requested permission, but reduced the rent so much that the produce of the vine seldom fails to satisfy their kind landlord.

Now Hannah showed great judgment in setting up as a dairy-woman. She could not have chosen an occupation more completely unoccupied, or more loudly called for. One of the most provoking of the petty difficulties which beset people with a small establishment in this neighbourhood, is the trouble, almost the impossibility, of procuring the pastoral luxuries of milk, eggs, and butter, which rank, unfortunately, amongst the indispensable necessities of housekeeping. To your thoroughbred Londoner, who, whilst grumbling over his own breakfast, is apt

to fancy that thick cream, and fresh butter, and new-laid eggs, grow, so to say, in the country,—form an actual part of its natural produce,—it may be some comfort to learn that in this great grazing district, however the calves and the farmers may be the better for cows, nobody else is; that farmers' wives have ceased to keep poultry; and that we unlucky villagers sit down often to our first meal in a state of destitution, which may well make him content with his thin milk and his Cambridge butter, when compared to our imputed pastoralities.

Hannah's Alderney restored us to one rural privilege. Never was so cleanly a little milkmaid. She changed away some of the cottage finery, which, in his prosperous days, poor Jack had pleased himself with bringing home,—the china tea-service, the gilded mugs, and the painted waiters,—for the useful utensils of the dairy, and speedily established a regular and gainful trade in milk, eggs, butter, honey, and poultry,—for poultry they had always kept.

Her domestic management prospered equally. Her father, who retained the perfect use of his hands, began a manufacture of mats and baskets, which he constructed with great nicety and adroitness; the eldest boy, a sharp and clever lad, cut for him his rushes and osiers; erected, under his sister's direction, a shed for the cow, and enlarged and cultivated the garden (always with the good leave of her kind patron the lord of the manor), until it became so ample that the produce not only kept the pig, and half kept the family, but afforded another branch of merchandise to the indefatigable directress of the establishment. For the younger boy, less quick and active, Hannah contrived to obtain an admission to the charity school, where he made great progress; retaining him at home,

however, in the hay-making and leasing season, or whenever his services could be made available, to the great annoyance of the schoolmaster, whose favourite he is, and who piques himself so much on George's scholarship (your heavy, sluggish boy at country work often turns out quick at his book), that it is the general opinion that this much-vaunted pupil will, in process of time, be promoted to the post of assistant, and may possibly, in course of years, rise to the dignity of a parish pedagogue in his own person; so that his sister, although still making him useful at odd times, now considers George as pretty well off her hands; whilst his elder brother Tom could take an under-gardener's place directly, if he were not too important at home to be spared even for a day.

In short, during the five years that she has ruled at the Shaw cottage, the world has gone well with Hannah Bint. Her cow, her calves, her pigs, her bees, her poultry, have each in their several ways thriven and prospered. She has even brought Watch to like buttermilk as well as strong beer, and has nearly persuaded her father (to whose wants and wishes she is most anxiously attentive) to accept of milk as a substitute for gin. Not but Hannah hath had her enemies as well as her betters. Why should she not? The old woman at the lodge, who always piqued herself on being spiteful, and crying down new ways, foretold from the first she would come to no good, and could not forgive her for falsifying her prediction; and Betty Barnes, the slatternly widow of a tippling farmer, who rented a field and set up a cow herself, and was universally discarded for insufferable dirt, said all that the wit of an envious woman could devise against Hannah and her Alderney; nay, even Ned Miles, the keeper, her next neighbour, who

had whilom held entire sway over the Shaw common, as well as its coppices, grumbled as much as so good-natured and genial a person could grumble, when he found a little girl sharing his dominion, a cow grazing beside his pony, and vulgar cocks and hens hovering around the buck-wheat destined to feed his noble pheasants. Nobody that had been accustomed to see that paragon of keepers, so tall and manly and pleasant-looking, with his merry eye and his knowing smile, striding gaily along, in his green coat and his gold-laced hat, with Neptune, his noble Newfoundland dog (a retriever is the sporting word), and his beautiful spaniel Flirt at his heels, could conceive how askew he looked when he first found Hannah and Watch holding equal reign over his old territory, the Shaw common.

Yes, Hannah hath had her enemies ; but they are passing away. The old woman at the lodge is dead, poor creature ; and Betty Barnes, having herself taken to tippling, has lost the few friends she once possessed, and looks, luckless wretch, as if she would soon die too ; and the keeper !—why, he is not dead, or like to die,—but the change that has taken place there is the most astonishing of all,—except, perhaps, the change in Hannah herself.

Few damsels of twelve years old, generally a very pretty age, were less pretty than Hannah Bint. Short and stunted in her figure, thin in face, sharp in feature, with a muddled complexion, wild sun-burnt hair, and eyes whose very brightness had in them something startling ; over-informed, super-subtle, too clever for her age,—at twelve years old she had quite the air of a little old fairy. Now, at seventeen, matters are mended. Her complexion has cleared ; her countenance has developed itself ; her figure has

shot up into height and lightness, and a sort of rustic grace ; her bright, acute eye is softened and sweetened by the womanly wish to please ; her hair is trimmed, and curled, and brushed with exquisite neatness, and her whole dress arranged with that nice attention to the becoming, the suitable both in form and texture, which would be called the highest degree of coquetry, if it did not deserve the better name of propriety. Never was such a transmogrification beheld. The lass is really pretty, and Ned Miles has discovered that she is so. There he stands, the rogue, close at her side (for he hath joined her whilst we have been telling her little story, and the milking is over),—there he stands, holding her milk-pail in one hand, and stroking Watch with the other, whilst she is returning the compliment by patting Neptune's magnificent head. There they stand, as much like lovers as may be,—he smiling, and she blushing,—he never looking so handsome, nor she so pretty, in all their lives. There they stand, in blessed forgetfulness of all except each other, as happy a couple as ever trod the earth. There they stand, and one would not disturb them for all the milk and butter in Christendom. I should not wonder if they were fixing the wedding-day.





THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

NOVEMBER 6TH.—The weather is as peaceful to-day, as calm and as mild, as in early April; and perhaps an autumn afternoon and a spring morning do resemble each other more in feeling, and even in appearance, than any two periods of the year. There is in both the same freshness and dewiness of the herbage, the same balmy softness in the air, and the same pure and lovely blue sky, with white fleecy clouds floating across it. The chief difference lies in the absence of flowers, and the presence of leaves. But then the foliage of November is so rich, and glowing, and varied, that it may well supply the place of the gay blossoms of the spring; whilst all the flowers of the field or the garden could never make amends for the want of leaves,—that beautiful and graceful attire in which nature has clothed the rugged forms of trees,—the verdant drapery to which the landscape owes its loveliness, and the forests their glory.

If choice must be between two seasons, each so full of charm, it is at least no bad philosophy to prefer the present good, even whilst looking gratefully back, and hopefully forward, to the past and the future. And of a surety no fairer specimen of a November day could well be found than this,—a day made to wander

‘ By yellow commons and birch-shaded hollows,
And hedgerows bordering unfrequented lanes ;’

nor could a prettier country be found for our walk than this shady and yet sunny Berkshire, where the scenery, without rising into grandeur or breaking into wildness, is so peaceful, so cheerful, so varied, and so thoroughly English.

We must bend our steps towards the water-side, for I have a message to leave at Farmer Riley’s ; and, sooth to say, it is no unpleasant necessity, for the road thither is smooth and dry, retired as one likes a country walk to be, but not too lonely, which women never like ; leading past the Loddon,—the bright, brimming, transparent Loddon, a fitting mirror for this bright blue sky,—and terminating at one of the prettiest and most comfortable farm-houses in the neighbourhood.

How beautiful the lane is to-day, decorated with a thousand colours ! The brown road, and the rich verdure that borders it, strewn with the pale yellow leaves of the elm, just beginning to fall ; hedgerows glowing with long wreaths of the bramble in every variety of purplish red ; and overhead the unchanged green of the fir, contrasting with the spotted sycamore, the tawny beech, and the dry sere leaves of the oak, which rustle as the light wind passes through them ; a few common hardy yellow flowers (for yellow is the common colour of flowers, whether wild or cultivated, as blue is the rare one), flowers of many sorts, but almost of one tint, still blowing in spite of the season, and ruddy berries glowing through all. How very beautiful is the lane !

And how pleasant is this hill where the road widens, with the group of cattle by the wayside, and George Hearn, the little post-boy, trundling his hoop at full

speed, making all the better haste in his work because he cheats himself into thinking it play! And how beautiful, again, is this patch of common at the hill-top, with the clear pool, where Martha Pither's children, —elves of three, and four, and five years old,—without any distinction of sex in their sunburnt faces and tattered drapery, are dipping up water in their little homely cups, shining with cleanliness, and a small brown pitcher, with the lip broken, to fill that great kettle, which, when it is filled, their united strength will never be able to lift! They are quite a group for a painter, with their rosy cheeks and chubby hands, and round merry faces; and the low cottage in the background, peeping out of its vine leaves and China-roses, with Martha at the door, tidy and comely and smiling, preparing the potatoes for the pot, and watching the progress of dipping and filling that useful utensil, completes the picture.

But we must go on. No time for more sketches in these short days. It is getting cold too. We must proceed in our walk. Dash is showing us the way, and beating the thick double hedgerow that runs along the side of the meadows at a rate that indicates game astir, and causes the leaves to fly as fast as an east wind after a hard frost. Ah! a pheasant! a superb cock pheasant! Nothing is more certain than Dash's questing, whether in a hedgerow or covert, for a better spaniel never went into the field; but I fancied that it was a hare afoot, and was almost as much startled to hear the whirring of those splendid wings, as the princely bird himself would have been at the report of a gun. Indeed, I believe that the way in which a pheasant goes off does sometimes make young sportsmen a little nervous (they don't own it very readily, but the observation may be relied

on nevertheless), until they get, as it were, broken in to the sound; and then that grand and sudden burst of wing becomes as pleasant to them as it seems to be to Dash, who is beating the hedgerow with might and main, and giving tongue louder, and sending the leaves about faster than ever,—very proud of finding the pheasant, and perhaps a little angry with me for not shooting it, at least looking as if he would be angry if I were a man; for Dash is a dog of great sagacity, and has doubtless not lived four years in the sporting world without making the discovery that although gentlemen do shoot, ladies do not.

The Loddon at last! the beautiful Loddon! and the bridge, where every one stops, as by instinct, to lean over the rails, and gaze a moment on a landscape of surpassing loveliness,—the fine grounds of the Great House, with their magnificent groups of limes, and firs, and poplars, grander than ever poplars were; the green meadows opposite, studded with oaks and elms; the clear winding river; the mill with its picturesque old buildings bounding the scene,—all glowing with the rich colouring of autumn, and harmonized by the soft beauty of the clear blue sky, and the delicious calmness of the hour. The very peasant whose daily path it is cannot cross that bridge without a pause.

But the day is wearing fast, and it grows colder and colder. I really think it will be a frost. After all, spring is the pleasantest season, beautiful as this scenery is. We must get on. Down that broad yet shadowy lane, between the park, dark with evergreens and dappled with deer, and the meadows, where sheep and cows and horses are grazing under the tall elms,—that lane, where the wild bank, clothed with fern and tufted with furze, and crowned by rich berried thorn and thick shining holly on the one side, seems to vie

in beauty with the picturesque old paling, the bright laurels, and the plummy cedars, on the other ;—down that shady lane, until the sudden turn brings us to an opening where four roads meet, where a noble avenue turns down to the Great House ; where the village church rears its modest spire from amidst its venerable yew trees ; and where, embosomed in orchards and gardens, and backed by barns and ricks, and all the wealth of the farmyard, stands the spacious and comfortable abode of good Farmer Riley,—the end and object of our walk.

And in happy time the message is said and the answer given, for this beautiful mild day is edging off into a dense frosty evening ; the leaves of the elm and the linden in the old avenue are quivering and vibrating and fluttering in the air, and at length falling crisply on the earth, as if Dash were beating for pheasants in the tree-tops ; the sun gleams dimly through the fog, giving little more of light and heat than his fair sister the lady moon,—I don't know a more disappointing person than a cold sun ; and I am beginning to wrap my cloak closely round me, and to calculate the distance to my own fireside, recanting all the way my praises of November, and longing for the showery, flowery April, as much as if I were a half-chilled butterfly, or a dahlia knocked down by the frost.

Ah, dear me ! what a climate this is, that one cannot keep in the same mind about it for half an hour together ! I wonder, by the way, whether the fault is in the weather, which Dash does not seem to care for, or in me ? If I should happen to be wet through in a shower next spring, and should catch myself longing for autumn, that would settle the question.



A GREAT FARM-HOUSE.

THESE are bad times for farmers. I am sorry for it. Independently of all questions of policy, as a mere matter of taste and of old association, it is a fine thing to witness the hospitality and to think of the social happiness of a great farm-house. No situation in life seemed so richly privileged ; none had so much power for good, and so little for evil ; it seemed a place where pride could not live, and poverty could not enter. These thoughts pressed on my mind the other day in passing the green sheltered lane, overhung with trees like an avenue, that leads to the great farm at M., where ten or twelve years ago I used to spend so many pleasant days. I could not help advancing a few paces up the lane, and then turning to lean over the gate, seemingly gazing on the rich undulating valley crowned with woody hills, which, as I stood under the dark and shady arch, lay bathed in the sunshine before me, but really absorbed in thoughts of other times, in recollections of the old delights of that delightful place, and of the admirable qualities of its owners. How often had I opened the gate, and how gaily,—certain of meeting a smiling welcome,—and what a picture of comfort it was !

Passing up the lane, we used first to encounter a

thick solid suburb of ricks of all sorts, shapes, and dimensions. Then came the farm, like a town,—a magnificent series of buildings, stables, cart-houses, cow-houses, granaries, and barns that might hold half the corn of the parish, placed at all angles towards each other, and mixed with smaller habitations for pigs, dogs, and poultry. They formed, together with the old substantial farm-house, a sort of amphitheatre, looking over a beautiful meadow, which swept greenly and abruptly down into fertile enclosures, richly set with hedgerow timber,—oak, and ash, and elm. Both the meadow and the farmyard swarmed with inhabitants of the earth and of the air,—horses, oxen, cows, calves, heifers, sheep, and pigs; beautiful greyhounds, all manner of poultry, a tame goat, and a pet donkey.

The master of this land of plenty was well fitted to preside over it,—a thick, stout man of middle height, and middle aged, with a healthy, ruddy square face, all alive with intelligence and good-humour. There was a lurking jest in his eye, and a smile about the corners of his firmly-closed lips, that gave assurance of good fellowship. His voice was loud enough to have hailed a ship at sea without the assistance of a speaking-trumpet, wonderfully rich and round in its tones, and harmonizing admirably with his bluff, jovial visage. He wore his dark shining hair combed straight over his forehead, and had a trick, when particularly merry, of stroking it down with his hand. The moment his hand approached his head, out flew a jest.

Besides his own great farm, the business of which seemed to go on like machinery, always regular, prosperous, and unfailing,—besides this and two or three constant stewardships, and a perpetual succession of arbitrations, in which, such was the influence of his

acuteness, his temper, and his sturdy justice, that he was often named by both parties, and left to decide alone,—in addition to these occupations, he was a sort of standing overseer and churchwarden ; he ruled his own hamlet like a despotic monarch, and took a prime minister's share in the government of the large parish to which it was attached ; and one of the gentlemen whose estates he managed, being the independent member of an independent borough, he had every now and then a contested election on his shoulders. Even that did not discompose him. He had always leisure to receive his friends at home, or to visit them abroad ; to take journeys to London, or make excursions to the sea-side ; was as punctual in pleasure as in business, and thought being happy and making happy as much the purpose of his life as getting rich. His great amusement was coursing. He kept several brace of capital greyhounds, so high-blooded that I remember when five of them were confined in five different kennels on account of their ferocity. The greatest of living painters once called a greyhound 'the line of beauty in perpetual motion.' Our friend's large dogs were a fine illustration of this remark. His old dog Hector, for instance, for whom he refused a hundred guineas,—what a superb dog was Hector ! a model of grace and symmetry, necked and crested like an Arabian, and bearing himself with a stateliness and gallantry which showed some 'conscience of his worth !' He was the largest dog I ever saw, but so finely proportioned, that the most determined fault-finder could call him neither too long nor too heavy. There was not an inch too much of him. His colour was the purest white, entirely unspotted, except that his head was very regularly and richly marked with black. Hector was certainly a

perfect beauty. But the little bitches, on which his master piqued himself still more, were not in my poor judgment so admirable. They were pretty little round, graceful things, sleek and glossy, and for the most part milk-white, with the smallest heads and the most dove-like eyes that were ever seen. There was a peculiar sort of innocent beauty about them, like that of a roly-poly child. They were as gentle as lambs too : all the evil spirit of the family evaporated in the gentlemen. But to my thinking these pretty creatures were fitter for the parlour than the field. They were strong, certainly, excellently loined, cat-footed, and chested like a war-horse ; but there was a want of length about them,—a want of room, as the coursers say,—something a little, a very little, inclined to the clumsy,—a dumpiness, a pointer-look. They went off like an arrow from a bow ; for the first hundred yards nothing could stand against them ; then they began to flag, to find their weight too much for their speed, and to lose ground from the shortness of the stroke. Up-hill, however, they were capital. There their compactness told. They turned with the hare, and lost neither wind nor way in the sharpest ascent. I shall never forget one single-handed course of our good friend's favourite little bitch Helen, on W. hill. All the coursers were in the valley below, looking up to the hill-side as on a moving picture. I suppose she turned the hare twenty times on a piece of greensward not much bigger than an acre, and as steep as the roof of a house. It was an old hare, a famous hare, one that had baffled half the dogs in the country ; but she killed him ; and then, though almost as large as herself, took it up in her mouth, brought it to her master, and laid it down at his feet. Oh, how pleased he was ! and what a pleasure it was to

see his triumph ! He did not always find W. hill so fortunate. It is a high, steep hill, of a conical shape, encircled by a mountain road winding up to the summit like a corkscrew,—a deep road dug out of the chalk, and fenced by high mounds on either side. The hares always make for this hollow way, as it is called, because it is too wide for a leap, and the dogs lose much time in mounting and descending the sharp acclivities. Very eager dogs, however, will sometimes dare the leap, and two of our good friend's favourite greyhounds perished in the attempt in two following years. They were found dead in the hollow way. After this he took a dislike to coursing meetings, and sported chiefly on his own beautiful farm.

His wife was like her husband, with a difference, as they say in heraldry. Like him in looks, only thinner and paler ; like him in voice and phrase, only not so loud ; like him in merriment and good-humour ; like him in her talent of welcoming, and making happy, and being kind ; like him in cherishing an abundance of pets, and in getting through with marvellous facility an astounding quantity of business and pleasure. Perhaps the quality in which they resembled each other most completely, was the happy ease and serenity of behaviour, so seldom found amongst people of the middle rank, who have usually a best manner and a worst, and whose best (that is, the studied, the company manner) is so very much the worst. She was frankness itself ; entirely free from prickly defiance, or bristling self-love. She never took offence or gave it ; never thought of herself or of what others would think of her ; had never been afflicted with the besetting sins of her station, a dread of vulgar, or an aspiration of the genteel. Those ' words of fear ' had never disturbed her delightful heartiness.

Her pets were her cows, her poultry, her bees, and her flowers ; chiefly her poultry, almost as numerous as the bees, and as various as the flowers. The farmyard swarmed with peacocks, turkeys, geese, tame and wild ducks, fowls, guinea-hens, and pigeons ; besides a brood or two of favourite bantams in the green court before the door, with a little ridiculous strutter of a cock at their head, who imitated the magnificent demeanour of the great Tom of the barnyard, just as Tom in his turn copied the fierce bearing of that warlike and terrible biped the he-turkey. I am the least in the world afraid of a turkey-cock, and used to steer clear of the turkey as often as I could. Commend me to the peaceable vanity of that jewel of a bird, the peacock, sweeping his gorgeous tail along the grass, or dropping it gracefully from some low-boughed tree, whilst he turns round his crested head with the air of a birthday belle, to see who admires him. What a glorious creature it is ! How thoroughly content with himself, and with all the world !

Next to her poultry our good farmer's wife loved her flower-garden ; and indeed it was of the very first water, the only thing about the place that was fine. She was a real, genuine florist ; valued pinks, tulips, and auriculas, for certain qualities of shape and colour, with which beauty has nothing to do ; preferred black ranunculuses, and gave in to all those obliquities of a triple-refined taste by which the professed florist contrives to keep pace with the vagaries of the bibliomaniac. Of all odd fashions, that of dark, gloomy, dingy flowers appears to me the oddest. Your true connoisseurs, now, shall prefer a deep puce hollyhock to the gay pink blossoms which cluster round that splendid plant like a pyramid of roses !

So did she. The nomenclature of her garden was more distressing still. One is never thoroughly sociable with flowers till they are naturalized,—as it were, christened, provided with decent, homely, well-wearing English names. Now her plants had all sorts of heathenish appellations, which—no offence to her learning—always sounded wrong. I liked the bees' garden best; the plot of ground immediately round their hives, filled with common flowers for their use, and literally 'redolent of sweets.' Bees are insects of great taste in every way, and seem often to select for beauty as much as for flavour. They have a better eye for colour than the florist. The butterfly is also a *dilettante*. Rover though he be, he generally prefers the blossoms that become him best. What a pretty picture it is, in a sunshiny autumn day, to see a bright spotted butterfly, made up of gold and purple and splendid brown, swinging on the rich flower of the China-aster!

To come back to our farm. Within doors everything went as well as without. There were no fine misses sitting before the piano, and mixing the alloy of their new-fangled tinsel with the old sterling metal; nothing but an only son, excellently brought up, a fair slim youth, whose extraordinary and somewhat pensive elegance of mind and manner was thrown into fine relief by his father's loud hilarity, and harmonized delightfully with the smiling kindness of his mother. His Spensers and Thomsons, too, looked well amongst the hyacinths and geraniums that filled the windows of the little snug room in which they usually sat,—a sort of after-thought, built at an angle from the house, and looking into the farmyard. It was closely packed with favourite arm-chairs, favourite sofas, favourite tables, and a sideboard decorated with the

prize-cups and collars of the greyhounds, and generally loaded with substantial work-baskets, jars of flowers, great pyramids of home-made cakes, and sparkling bottles of gooseberry-wine, famous all over the country. The walls were covered with portraits of half-a-dozen greyhounds, a brace of spaniels as large as life, an old pony, and the master and mistress of the house in half-length. She as unlike as possible, —prim, mincing, delicate, in lace and satin; he so staringly and ridiculously like, that when the picture fixed its good-humoured eyes upon you as you entered the room, you were almost tempted to say, ‘How d’ye do?’ Alas! the portraits are now gone, and the originals. Death and distance have despoiled that pleasant home. The garden has lost its smiling mistress, the greyhounds their kind master; and new people; new manners, and new cares, have taken possession of the old abode of peace and plenty—the Great Farm house.

THE END.

William P. Nimmo & Co., Edinburgh.

NIMMO'S

SUNDAY AND WEEK-DAY REWARD BOOKS.

~~~~~  
*Foolscap 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges, Illustrated, price 1s. 6d. each.*  
~~~~~

1. **The Sculptor of Bruges.** By Mrs. W. G. Hall.
2. **Christmas at the Beacon: A Tale for the Young.** By Ellen PALMER.
3. **The Sea and the Savages: A Story of Adventure.** By HAROLD LINCOLN.
4. **The Swedish Singer; or, The Story of Vanda Rosendahl.** By Mrs. W. G. Hall.
5. **My Beautiful Home; or, Lily's Search.** By Chas. Bruce.
6. **Summer Holidays at Silversea.** By E. Rosalie Salmon.
7. **Fred Graham's Resolve.** By the Author of 'Mat and Sofie,' etc. etc.
8. **Wilton School; or, Harry Campbell's Revenge.** A Tale. By F. E. WEATHERLY.
9. **Grace Harvey and her Cousins.**
10. **Blind Mercy; and other Tales for the Young.** By Gertrude CROCKFORD.
11. **Evan Lindsay.** By Margaret Fraser Tytler, Author of 'Tales of Good and Great Kings,' 'Tales of the Great and Brave,' etc.
12. **Harvey Sinclair; or, A Lesson for Life.** By the Author of 'Mat and Sofie,' 'Fred Graham's Resolve.'
13. **The Boys of Willoughby School: A Tale.** By Robert RICHARDSON, B.A., Author of 'The Cold Shoulder,' 'Our Junior Mathematical Master,' etc.

Complete Catalogues of W. P. NIMMO & CO.'S Publication
may be had post free on application.

William P. Nimmo & Co., Edinburgh.

NIMMO'S ONE SHILLING FAVOURITE REWARD BOOKS.

Demy 18mo, Illustrated, cloth extra, price 1s. each; also in gilt side and edges, price 1s. 6d. each.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Vicar of Wakefield. Poems and Essays. By OLIVER GOLDSMITH.2. Æsop's Fables, with Instructive Applications. By Dr. CROXALL.3. Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.4. The Young Man-of-War's Man. By CHARLES NORDHOFF, Author of 'Seeing the World.'5. The Treasury of Anecdote : Moral and Religious.6. The Boy's Own Workshop ; or, The Young Carpenters. By JACOB ABBOTT.7. The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. The History of Sandford and Merton.9. Evenings at Home ; or, The Juvenile Budget Opened.10. Unexpected Pleasures ; or, Left alone in the Holidays. By MRS. GEORGE CUPPLES, Author of 'Norrie Seton,' etc.11. The Beauties of Shakespeare. With a General Index by the Rev. WILLIAM DODD, LL.D.12. Gems from 'The Spectator.' A Selection from the most admired Writings of Addison and Steele.13. Burns' Poetical Works. With a Complete Glossary.14. The Sketch Book. By WASHINGTON IRVING. |
|--|--|

~~~~~  
\*.\* The above Series of elegant and useful books is specially prepared for the entertainment and instruction of young persons.

### NIMMO'S POPULAR RELIGIOUS GIFT BOOKS.

18mo, finely printed on toned paper, handsomely bound in cloth extra, price 1s. each.

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Across the River: Twelve</b> Views of Heaven. By NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D.; R. W. HAMILTON, D.D.; ROBERT S. CANDLISH, D.D.; JAMES HAMILTON, D.D., etc. etc. etc.</li><li>2. <b>The Chastening of Love :</b> Words of Consolation for the Christian Mourner. By JOSEPH PARKER, D.D., Manchester.</li><li>3. <b>The Cedar Christian, and</b> other Practical Papers. By the Rev. THEODORE L. CUTLER.</li><li>4. <b>Spirit of the Old Divines.</b></li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. <b>The Orphan ; or, Words of</b> Comfort for the Fatherless and Motherless.</li><li>6. <b>Choice Gleanings from</b> Sacred Writers.</li><li>7. <b>Direction in Prayer ; or,</b> The Lord's Prayer Illustrated in a Series of Expositions. By PETER GRANT, D.D., Author of 'Emblems of Jesus,' etc.</li><li>8. <b>Scripture Imagery.</b> By PETER GRANT, D.D., Author of 'Emblems of Jesus,' etc.</li></ol> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

---

## William P. Nimmo & Co., Edinburgh.

---

### Nimmo's Sixpenny Juvenile Books.

*Small Foolscap 8vo, Illustrated, handsomely bound in cloth,  
price 6d. each.*

- |                                                                                  |                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Pearls for Little People.</i>                                              | 23. <i>Little Henry and his Bearer.</i><br>By Mrs. SHERWOOD.                |
| 2. <i>Great Lessons for Little People.</i>                                       | 24. <i>The Holidays at Wilton, and other Stories.</i> By ADELAIDE AUSTEN.   |
| 3. <i>Reason in Rhyme: A Poetry Book for the Young.</i>                          | 25. <i>Chryssie Lyle: A Tale for the Young.</i> By CECIL SCOTT.             |
| 4. <i>Æsop's Little Fable Book.</i>                                              | 26. <i>Little Elsie among the Quarrymen.</i> By ELLEN PALMER.               |
| 5. <i>Grapes from the Great Vine.</i>                                            | 27. <i>The Lesson of Obedience.</i> By the Rev. RICHARD NEWTON, D.D.        |
| 6. <i>The Pot of Gold.</i>                                                       | 28. <i>The Lesson of Diligence.</i> By the Rev. RICHARD NEWTON, D.D.        |
| 7. <i>Story Pictures from the Bible.</i>                                         | 29. <i>Fergus: A Tale.</i> By Jacob ABBOTT.                                 |
| 8. <i>The Tables of Stone: Illustrations of the Commandments.</i>                | 30. <i>Gilbert and his Mother.</i> By Jacob ABBOTT.                         |
| 9. <i>Ways of Doing Good.</i>                                                    | 31. <i>The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain.</i> By HANNAH MORE.                 |
| 10. <i>Stories about our Dogs.</i> By HARRIET BERTCHER STOWE.                    | 32. <i>Emily Barton, and other Stories.</i> By CHARLES and MARY LAMB.       |
| 11. <i>The Red-Winged Goose.</i>                                                 | 33. <i>Elizabeth Villiers, and other Stories.</i> By CHARLES and MARY LAMB. |
| 12. <i>The Hermit of the Hills.</i>                                              | 34. <i>The Grateful Negro.</i> By MARIA EDGEWORTH.                          |
| 13. <i>Effie's Christmas, and other Stories.</i> By ADELAIDE AUSTEN.             | 35. <i>Forgive and Forget.</i> By MARIA EDGEWORTH.                          |
| 14. <i>A Visit to Grandmother, and other Stories for the Young.</i>              | 36. <i>Waste not, Want not.</i> By MARIA EDGEWORTH.                         |
| 15. <i>Bible Stories for Young People.</i> By ADELAIDE AUSTEN.                   | 37. <i>The False Key.</i> By Maria EDGEWORTH.                               |
| 16. <i>The Little Woodman and his Dog Cæsar.</i> By Mrs. SHERWOOD.               | 38. <i>The Bracelets.</i> By Maria EDGEWORTH.                               |
| 17. <i>Among the Mountains: Tales for the Young.</i> By ADELAIDE AUSTEN.         |                                                                             |
| 18. <i>Little Gems for Little Readers.</i>                                       |                                                                             |
| 19. <i>Do your Duty, come what will, and other Stories for the Young.</i>        |                                                                             |
| 20. <i>Noble Joe: A Tale for Children.</i> By ADELAIDE AUSTEN.                   |                                                                             |
| 21. <i>Lucy Vernon, and other Stories for the Young.</i>                         |                                                                             |
| 22. <i>Anecdotes of Favourite Animals told for Children.</i> By ADELAIDE AUSTEN. |                                                                             |

---

### Nimmo's Fourpenny Juvenile Books.

*The above Series of Books is also kept in embossed and illuminated paper cover, beautifully printed in gold from entirely new designs, price 4d. each.*

William P. Nimmo & Co., Edinburgh.

NIMMO'S  
SUNDAY-SCHOOL REWARD BOOKS.  
IN PACKETS.

PENNY BOOKS. Twelve Books in Packet.

In demy 18mo, 16 pp., Illustrated. Coloured Wrapper with beautiful design. Price 1s. each Packet.

|                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| PACKET I., Twelve kinds. | PACKET IV., Twelve kinds. |
| " II., "                 | " V., "                   |
| " III., "                | " VI., "                  |

TWOPENNY BOOKS. Six Books in Packet.

In demy 18mo, 32 pp., Illustrated. Coloured Wrapper with beautiful design. Price 1s. each Packet.

|                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| PACKET I., . Six kinds. | PACKET IV., . Six kinds. |
| " II., . "              | " V., . "                |
| " III., . "             | " VI., . "               |

The above SUNDAY-SCHOOL REWARD PACKETS also kept in Volumes, demy 18mo, cloth extra, price 1s. each, or in gilt back and edges, price 1s. 6d. each, under the following titles:

1. *George and his Penny*, by Mrs. SHERWOOD; and other Tales.
2. *The Young Apprentice*, by JANE TAYLOR; and other Tales.
3. *Faithful unto Death*, by CHARLES BRUCE; and other Tales.
4. *My Little Teachers*, and other Tales.
5. *Brave and True*, and other Tales.
6. *Emily's Temptation*, and other Tales.
7. *The Negro Servant*, by Rev. LEIGH RICHMOND; and other Tales.
8. *The Orange Girl of St. Giles*, and other Tales.
9. *The Orange Grove*, by Mrs. SHERWOOD; and other Tales.
10. *Little Nat*, and other Tales.
11. *Learning by Experience*, and other Tales.
12. *The Orphan's Friend*, by JAMES F. COBB; and other Tales.

\* \* *The above Series of SUNDAY-SCHOOL REWARD BOOKS comprises some of the best selected Tales, written specially for Youth, by Mrs. SHERWOOD, JANE TAYLOR, RICHARD ROWE, JAMES F. COBB, F.R.G.S., CHARLES BRUCE, and other popular and well-known Authors. The moral teaching in each, though given in the form of a Story, is sound, healthy, and unmistakeable, while they are all written in a way which cannot fail to prove interesting and attractive to the very youngest class of readers.*



